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ANN

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A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By
LECHMERE WORRALL

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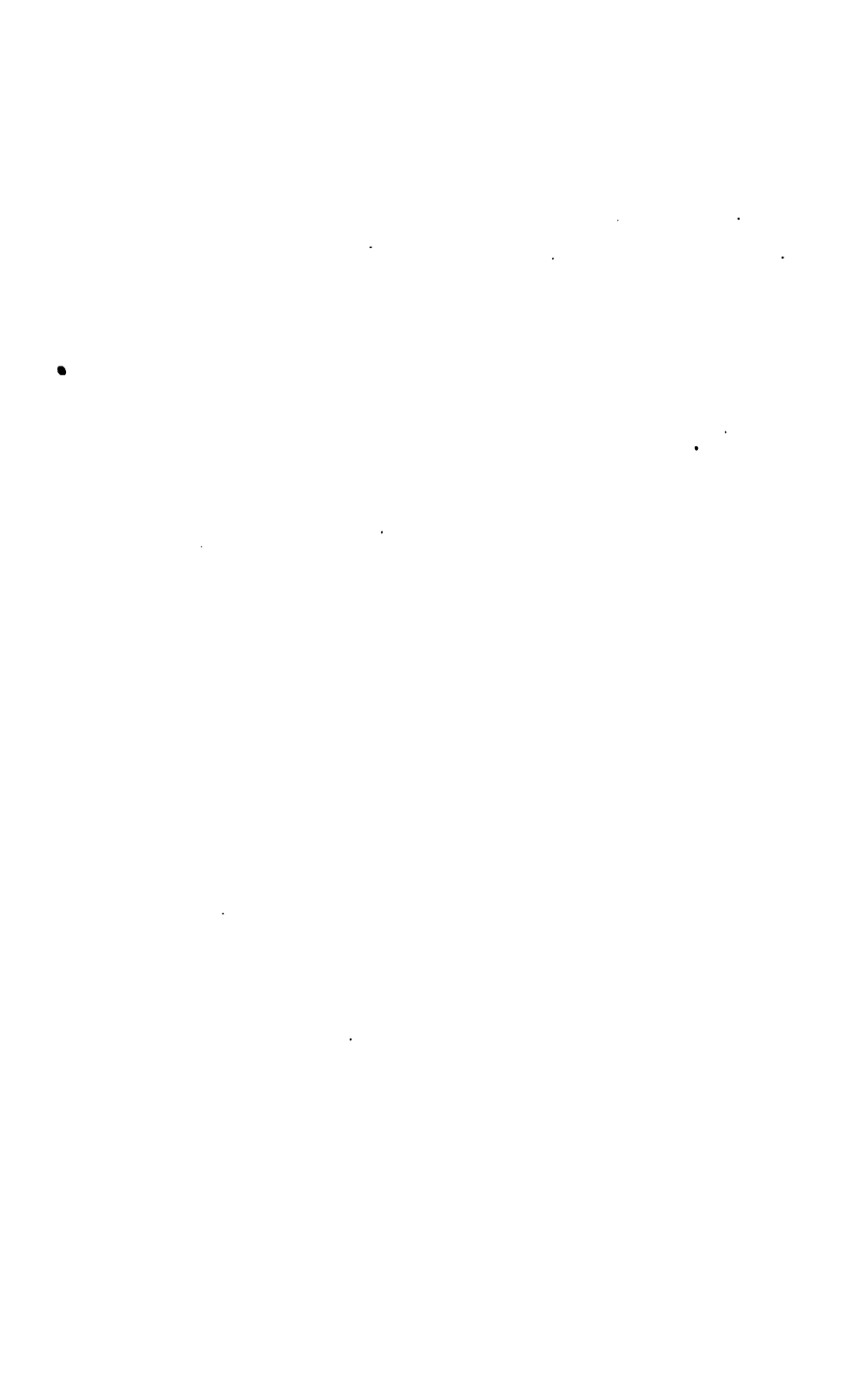
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TO
E. W.



ANN

Produced on June 18, 1912, at the Criterion Theatre, London, by Sir Charles Wyndham and Miss Mary Moore, and afterwards transferred to the Court Theatre, London, with the following cast :—

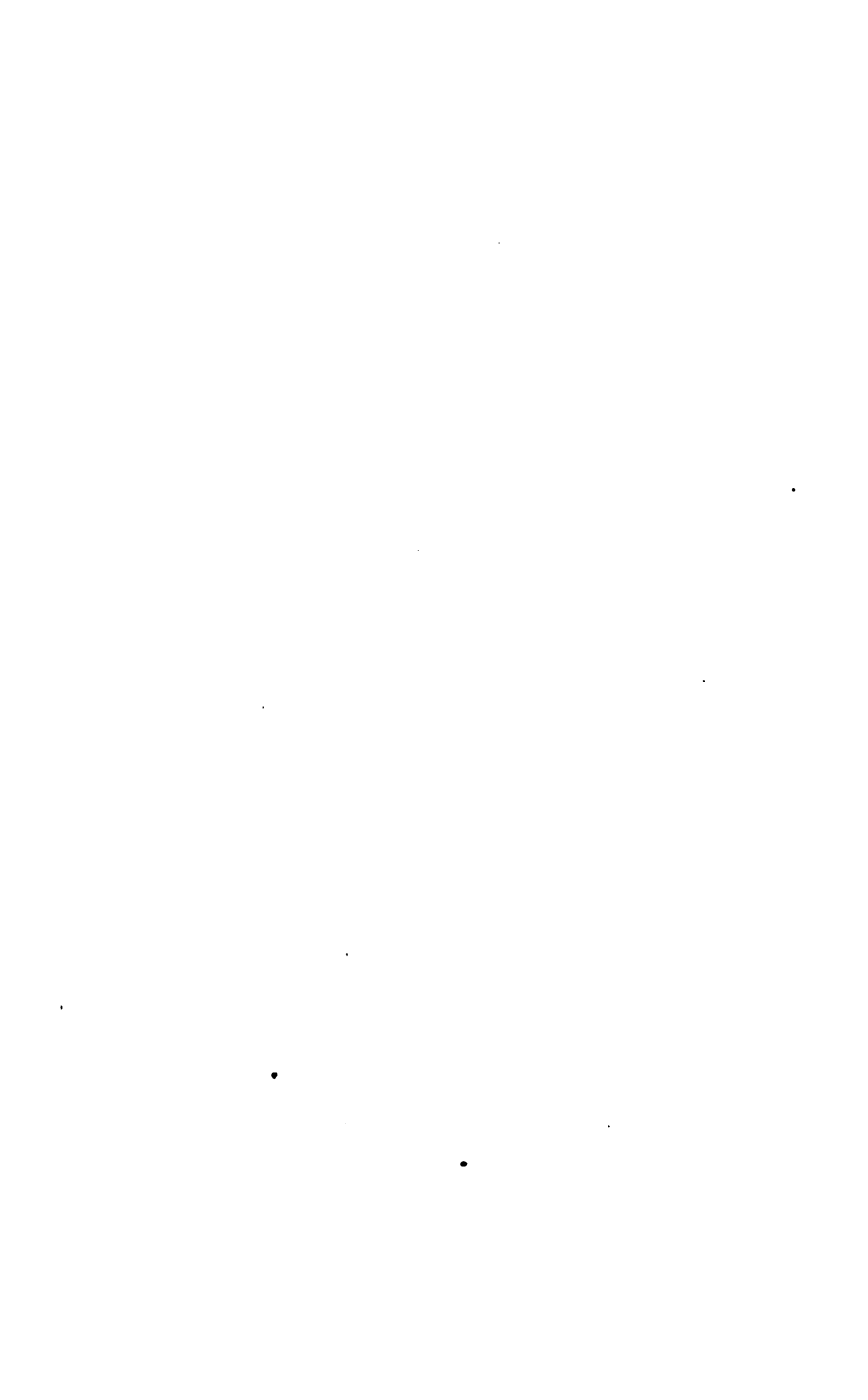
THE VERY REV. SAMUEL HARGRAVES (Dean of Milchester) . . .	<i>Mr. Holman Clark</i>
EDWARD HARGRAVES (his Son). . .	<i>Mr. Basil Hallam.</i>
" BILLY " (WILLIAM LLOYD) . . .	<i>Mr. Hylton Allen.</i>
MRS. HARGRAVES . . .	<i>Miss Fay Davis.</i>
EVANGELINE LIPSCOMB . . .	<i>Miss Jean Cadell.</i>
ANN ANNING (an American newspaper reporter) . . .	<i>Miss Renée Kelly.</i>

SCENE.—EDWARD HARGRAVES' *Chambers in a Residential Hotel, London.*

ACT I. Night.

ACT II. The following afternoon.

ACT III. The following evening.



ANN

ACT I

SCENE.—*Represents a very comfortable bachelor sitting-room in a Residential Hotel in London. A long bookcase filled with books in a very orderly manner R. A bust of Dante occupies a conspicuous position on the top of the bookcase. Door down R. leads to the staircase. Another door up L. leads into bedroom. Large recessed casement window, with window seat, at back R., opening on to balcony. Another large recessed casement window at back L. (also open.) Between the windows C. is a huge writing-desk with pedestal telephone, writing materials, photos, in frames, of DEAN and MRS. HARGRAVES. Electric reading lamp (lighted). Golf sticks close to table. Fireplace L. with carved overmantel. On mantel: Clock, ornaments and photograph, in frame, of EVANGELINE. Large Chesterfield settee down L. Armchairs C. and R. Club fender. Occasional tables, chairs, a quantity of ornaments, pipes, and all the paraphernalia of a young bachelor's den. Electric standard lamp just above L. end of settee (lighted). Fireplace down L. Fire lighted.*

(*At rise of curtain, MRS. HARGRAVES is discovered seated in an armchair C. darning her son's socks. The DEAN is asleep on the settee. EDWARD is sitting on the fender with his back to the fire. BILLY is seated R. doing a black and white sketch of the DEAN.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear boy, where do you buy your socks?

EDWARD. Oh, just anywhere, mater. I wish you wouldn't bother darning them.

BILLY. I always throw mine away, Mrs. Hargraves.

MRS. HARGRAVES. I should imagine you would, Billy.

(The DEAN snores loudly. All look at him.)

It's positively disgraceful!

BILLY *(drawing rapidly)*. If I could only suggest that snore!

MRS. HARGRAVES. Personally, I feel it's quite suggestive enough.

EDWARD *(laughing)*. Billy, the black-and-white artist—suggesting a snore!

(Telephone bell rings.)

(Going to 'phone.) Oh, bother!

BILLY. There she is again! Poor old Edward!

MRS. HARGRAVES. Who is it?

BILLY. An American interviewer, Mrs. Hargraves; awfully keen on Edward.

EDWARD *(taking up receiver)*. Yes? . . . No, I'm busy! I can't—tell her I won't be interviewed. . . . No, I won't! *(Puts receiver up.)* That's the sixth time she's rung me up. *(Comes down c.)*

MRS. HARGRAVES. I think it's very foolish not to see her.

BILLY. Poor old novelist—such is fame.

EDWARD *(c.)*. I do loathe the idea of being interviewed; it's so American.

BILLY. I wonder if it's that New York critic who praised your philosophy and roasted you so badly about your women?

MRS. HARGRAVES. You never sent me that one, Edward. What did it say about your women?

BILLY. Go ahead, Teddy; trot it out.

EDWARD *(reluctantly)*. It will keep.

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear boy, it won't.

BILLY. It's sour enough already.

MRS. HARGRAVES. I like to hear both good and bad.

EDWARD (*goes up to desk c.*). It isn't that I mind a slating; a good literary slating is bracing; but when they attack my accuracy—— (*Coming down c. with press-cutting book.*)

BILLY (*quickly*). Concerning women!

MRS. HARGRAVES (*laughs*). Isn't it quite usual in a first novel, and with a male novelist?

EDWARD. Yes, but—I——

BILLY. My dear chap, they're perfectly right. You don't know anything about women.

EDWARD. Thank you!

BILLY. You're welcome!

EDWARD (*finding press cutting*). Listen to this, mater. "His masterly methods of description are without blame, and his characterization of men and women is unique, but like many of the rising generation of novelists, he fails utterly in the handling of his womenfolk. Mr. Edward Hargraves knows nothing of women below the age of forty."

BILLY. Virtuous Edward!

MRS. HARGRAVES (*sighs*). It's certainly true.

EDWARD. I say, that's a bit thick, mater.

(DEAN snores.)

Dear old dad!

MRS. HARGRAVES. Who wrote it?

EDWARD (*cross to fireplace*). The same woman who always signs herself "Ann." She does go for me. Listen to this: "Mr. Hargraves' description of a passionate kiss passes all understanding . . ."

MRS. HARGRAVES (*interrupting*). Edward, you don't mean to tell me you never altered that kiss?

EDWARD. I suppose I didn't. (*Sits on club fender.*)

BILLY. Well, I'm only a poor black-and-white

artist, but if I couldn't draw a kiss in ink better than you can draw it in words, I'd chuck up art. Perhaps it's the same girl who wants the interview.

MRS. HARGRAVES. "Hannah's Honeymoon" was delightful in parts. Your characterization of Old Farmer Williams, for instance, was excellent. (*Sighing.*) I suppose you'll learn about women some day—you'll never write a successful novel if you don't.

EDWARD (*kissing his mother*). Dear old mater! (*Rises and goes to stool L. of chair C.*) How the girls would have loved you if you'd been a man. Apart from her slating, she's given me the most wonderful notice—read this. (*Gives her press-cutting book.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES (*reading*). "Mr. Hargraves writes with the enthusiasm of youth. His book breathes the purity and fragrance of a white man from cover to cover. The author of "Hannah's Honeymoon" is just a very clever child, who has observed with the philosophy of age and written with the optimistic inexperience of youth. Mr. Hargraves will go a long way."

EDWARD. Ha, ha!

MRS. HARGRAVES. "But he shouldn't go alone!"

BILLY. Wow-wow!

MRS. HARGRAVES. That's a clever woman who wrote that.

EDWARD. Probably some fearful blue-stocking.

(DEAN snores.)

BILLY (*with a half-laugh*). My hat!

MRS. HARGRAVES (*looking at cutting*). "Ann!"
I like Ann! (*Returns book to EDWARD.*)

BILLY. Edward appears to be pursued by Americans just at present. I suppose he hasn't told you it was an American girl he pulled out of the water at Henley yesterday?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Why, my dear boy, you never mentioned it.

EDWARD (*a little self-consciously*). Oh, it was nothing, mater—only a ridiculous accident. Some girl trying to punt; she and the punt parted company, and I went to the rescue.

BILLY (*to* MRS. HARGRAVES). Fearfully funny, Mrs. Hargraves, the punt pole subsided with dear little Stars and Stripes hanging on to the business end of it and shouting "Help!" "Help!" Pretty girl, too!

EDWARD. Was she?

BILLY (*scornfully*). "Was she"?

EDWARD. I didn't notice. Anyway, she overwhelmed me with gratitude. I wish people wouldn't make such a fuss about nothing.

BILLY. Oh, you're too retiring! I wish it'd been my rescue; she was a topping girl!

MRS. HARGRAVES (*to* EDWARD). I wonder if Evangeline will come round to-night?

EDWARD. Oh, she'll probably think you're both tired after your journey. She said she might ring up, though.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Have you seen much of her since she came up to London?

EDWARD. Oh, yes.

BILLY (*comes c. and showing drawing to both*). How's that for "The Dean's Snore"? (*Leans over back of* MRS. HARGRAVES' *chair c.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES (*laughing*). Really, it's quite a remarkable likeness under the circumstances.

(DEAN snores.)

EDWARD. By Jove, that is a snore! (*Rises and goes l.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Samuel! (*A pause—then clapping her hands together.*) Samuel!!

DEAN (*waking up*). H'm—yes—what was it you said, my dear?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Samuel, you've been snoring.

DEAN. My dear, I *never* snore!

EDWARD (*laughing*). Dear old dad! Anyway, Billy's got you in black and white.

DEAN. No! Has he? (*Fumbling for his glasses.*)
I must see——

(BILLY, *leaning over back of couch, shows picture to*
DEAN. *The DEAN, who has been gently laughing,*
stops abruptly at sight of drawing.)

(*Doubtfully.*) And do I really look like that? Remarkable!

MRS. HARGRAVES (*to BILLY*). I think you ought to present it to him to hang up in his study.

DEAN. My dear!

BILLY. It's yours with pleasure, sir.

DEAN. Oh, thank you! Thank you! I know you *meant* well! I'll have it framed. (*Returning drawing to BILLY.*)

(BILLY, *rather disgusted, goes round to R. and puts drawing on table.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. We've just been telling Edward he knows very little about women.

DEAN. Ah! There's plenty of time. Plenty of time. (*Picks up newspaper and becomes interested in it.*)

EDWARD. If something doesn't happen to enlighten me before I start my next novel, I warn you all, I shall take to politics.

BILLY. Well, it is easier; and you get four hundred a year.

DEAN (*to MRS. HARGRAVES*). If Edward would only be guided by us and get engaged to some nice girl, like——

EDWARD. I know—Evangeline. (*Takes up photo.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Why not, Edward? She's very amiable, thoroughly domesticated, and altogether desirable. You've been friends since you were children.

DEAN. A life companion to any man. A Ruth to any Boaz.

EDWARD. I've told you dear people so often I'm not in love with Evangeline. (*Puts picture on mantel-shelf.*)

(MRS. HARGRAVES sighs.)

Dear old mater, don't sigh, I can't help it. I've never met the woman yet who——

MRS. HARGRAVES. Your condition is positively dangerous. And remember, Evangeline is the kind of girl who will marry and be very happy without much romance.

EDWARD. I suppose I'm much the same.

(*The telephone bell rings again. EDWARD looks at it angrily and BILLY laughs.*)

EDWARD. Now if it's that interviewer, I'll——
(*Goes to 'phone.*)

(DEAN *has taken up the evening paper and is reading.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Do ask her up, Edward—you can't refuse.

EDWARD (*taking up receiver*). Yes, who is it?
(*Listens.*) I'm awfully sorry but I can't. . . . You'll what? (*Pause—alarmed.*) But, wait a minute—no, don't ring off. (*Listens.*) Well, I'm—— (*Puts down receiver.*)

BILLY. What's she want now?

EDWARD. Of all the cheek! Of all the——

MRS. HARGRAVES (*laughing*). What on earth's the matter?

EDWARD. She says she'll get that interview whether I like it or not.

DEAN (*putting paper down*). But who is it, my dear boy?

EDWARD (c.). Oh, some American newspaper woman who wants to interview me, dad!

BILLY. What else did she say?

EDWARD. Called me a shy, self-conscious Englishman.

BILLY. No!

(MRS. HARGRAVES bursts out laughing.)

DEAN (*taking up newspaper again*). These Americans are a wonderful people—a truly wonderful people!

BILLY. I bet you she'll get that interview!

MRS. HARGRAVES. I hope she will; you've no sense of business.

DEAN (*looking at paper*). Why, what's this, Edward, about you and an accident at Henley?

BILLY. Ha, ha! Serves you jolly well right. They've stuck it in the paper.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Read it, Samuel.

DEAN (*reading impressively*). "A Novelist Hero." "Mr. Edward Hargraves, whose first novel has been one of the most widely-discussed books of the year, yesterday rescued an American lady from an awkward predicament at Henley. Whilst making an amateurish attempt at punting, the lady and the punt parted company. As the pole sank deeper and deeper into the mud, her position became more and more precarious, and in a few moments she was struggling in the water. Mr. Hargraves, who was on a houseboat near by, without a moment's hesitation, jumped into the water and rescued our fair American cousin amidst the plaudits of those who witnessed the accident from the bank."

BILLY. "Amen!" (*Continuing*). Much to the secret joy of his friend, Billy Lloyd, who wasn't a bit heroic, but remained high and dry on the bank.

EDWARD. What rot—shoving stuff like that in the papers. (*Down L.*)

DEAN. My dear boy, you did your duty manfully.

MRS. HARGRAVES. And you have no idea who the girl was?

EDWARD. None at all.

BILLY (*looking at his watch*). I say, Mr. Hargraves, I don't want to hurry you, but if we're going slumming, oughtn't we to be off?

DEAN (*rising and coming L.C.*). Certainly. (*To MRS. HARGRAVES.*) My dear, I suppose you will go to bed early to-night?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Yes, but I want to have a talk with Edward first.

DEAN (*to MRS. HARGRAVES*). God bless you—good-night, my dear. (*To EDWARD.*) I'll look in later on my way upstairs.

(*Exit DEAN R.*)

BILLY (*to MRS. HARGRAVES*). I say, Mrs. Hargraves, if you can't persuade him to propose to Evangeline, try and persuade Evangeline to propose to me. By-bye, Teddie.

(*Exit BILLY laughing R.*)

(*There is a moment's pause after they are gone. MRS. HARGRAVES darns socks energetically. EDWARD re-arranges papers on table.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Edward, I want to have a heart to heart talk with you.

EDWARD. Yes, dear old darling. (*Sits on stool at MRS. HARGRAVES' feet.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. A parson's wife is peculiarly placed, and however much of a woman of the world she may be, she must not show it.

EDWARD. I know.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Your father, God bless him, is one of the best of men, but he's narrow-minded—he can't help it. He's told me so—often!

EDWARD. Dear old dad!

MRS. HARGRAVES. You, Edward, are growing like him, and I can't stand it.

EDWARD. But——

MRS. HARGRAVES. You are—you've been twenty-

eight years in this world and you've not even begun to understand women. (*Facing him.*) Edward, why don't you break out—and—— (*Rises, goes to L.*)

EDWARD. And what——?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Make an effort—flirt—*kiss* somebody! Find some really nice girl who wants to——

EDWARD. My dear old darling, what in Heaven's name are you driving at?

MRS. HARGRAVES (*energetically*). Can't you see your whole success as a novel writer depends on your understanding women more thoroughly?

EDWARD. Women bore me, mater. (*To c.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Because you've only known the Cathedral Town girl. Surely, after being in London three years you might have—well, met some types.

EDWARD. It's not easy to—well, I——

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear boy, it's just cowardice. You've been afraid of the sex all your life. From a little boy I've noticed it. If only you'd been blessed with sisters—and cheek. But, dear, it's time you made an effort.

EDWARD (*nervously*). It takes up so much time, mater.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Nonsense! It's never waste of time—never; a woman's man can always succeed in the world. (*Crosses R.*)

EDWARD (*sitting in armchair c.*). I can't flirt; I've tried. Billy bullied me into it at Cambridge. I tried to talk to a little girl in a Restaurant he knew—she hated me—positively loathed me in five minutes.

MRS. HARGRAVES (*sadly*). Poor Edward.

EDWARD. The last time I made a terrific effort with some other girls Billy knows. We took two down to Richmond in a boat. The most boring experience I've ever had—conversation was all of the gigly sort.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Were they pretty girls? (*R.*)

EDWARD. Yes, I suppose so; in a way—in a fluffy, frilly way

MRS. HARGRAVES. Oh, my poor dear boy! (*Goes up towards window R.*)

EDWARD. No, it's no good, mater. It can't be done. (*Rises, goes to MRS. HARGRAVES.*) You're the only woman I really care to talk to.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Fiddlesticks! You know, Edward, I'm very much afraid you'll develop into a prig, and I can't stand it.

EDWARD. Very sorry, darling; then I suppose I'll have to. (*Comes slowly down C. towards fireplace.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Poor, poor Edward. (*Goes up by desk.*)

EDWARD (*struck with an idea. Goes to photo on mantel, and takes it up*). I tell you what, darling; I'll ask Evangeline to marry me. Does that please you?

MRS. HARGRAVES (*thoughtfully*). It's not a bad idea. (*Coming down C.*)

EDWARD. I shall tell her I don't love her.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Don't you even like her?

EDWARD. Yes, I like her—she's amiable.

MRS. HARGRAVES. But you're such old friends, and Evangeline has always been fond of you.

EDWARD. Has she?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Yes, she's one of those girls who always make successful wives, even when they merely marry for marrying's sake.

EDWARD. She won't be obtrusive, and she's awfully clean and tidy.

(*MRS. HARGRAVES looks at EDWARD with a doubtful smile.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. She'll accept you, Edward. Remember, even if you don't love her very much, you've got to be interested in her.

EDWARD. Of course, of course!

MRS. HARGRAVES. And——

(The telephone bell rings. EDWARD goes up to 'phone quickly.)

Dear me, what a start those things give me.

EDWARD (*answering telephone*). Look here, this is the seventh time to-day, and I'm fed up with it—fed up with it—fed—— *Who is it?* . . . Oh, by Jove! No, I didn't mean you—I'm awfully sorry. The mater came up to town to-day . . . yes—and the governor.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Who is it? (*Slowly up to EDWARD*,

EDWARD (*to his mother*). Evangeline! (*Listening*.) What? . . . yes, do—when will you come? . . . To-morrow afternoon—right you are. Tea.

MRS. HARGRAVES (*up to EDWARD, putting her hand over receiver*). Why don't you propose to her now? (*Removes hand from receiver*.)

EDWARD. Good Lord, over the 'phone? (*To EVANGELINE*.) It's all right; I wasn't speaking to you, I—it was the mater.

MRS. HARGRAVES. It will be much easier over the 'phone.

EDWARD (*to MRS. HARGRAVES*). Will it?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Yes, let me speak to her first.

EDWARD (*speaking into 'phone*). Don't ring off—the mater wants to talk to you. . . . Yes, it's serious.

MRS. HARGRAVES (*taking up 'phone*). How are you, dear? (*Pause*.) Oh, we had quite a nice journey. (*Pause*.) Yes, very well. (*With a little nervous cough*.) Evangeline, Edward's going to——

EDWARD (*nervously interrupting*). It was a joke, mater—a joke!

MRS. HARGRAVES. Seems very absurd over the 'phone, but Edward wants to ask you something.

EDWARD. Joke, mater! (*Hands outstretched*.)

MRS. HARGRAVES (*slapping his hands down*). Will you be quiet? (*Into 'phone*.) Yes—he's going to

now—I do hope you'll say yes—— (*Pause.*) But I do hope you'll say yes—some day.

(*She motions to EDWARD to take receiver. EDWARD takes it nervously and stands uncomfortably.*)

(*Collecting his socks.*) I'll put your socks away.

EDWARD. But I say, mater, you're not going to leave me!

MRS. HARGRAVES (*bus.*).. My dear boy, I can't propose for you.

(*Exit MRS. HARGRAVES to bedroom L.*)

EDWARD. Are you there? . . . Er, good—I'm glad you're there. . . . What is what? . . . Oh, I'm just going to tell you. Look here, Evangeline, I'm thinking of—well, I want to get married—some day . . . get married—*married*—m-a-r-r-i-e-d. And—er, well, you and I have known each other—I say (*shouting.*) you and I have known each other a long while. Am I what? . . . Yes, I *am* proposing . . . of course I'm in earnest—I think we'll just get on splendidly and. . . . What's that? You knew? . . . (*Laughs a little nervously.*) I know I'm shy. You *will*? Oh, thank you—I mean, thank you for keeping me out of suspense. . . . Oh, yes, thank you—quite a relief. . . . No, I don't love you just like that. . . . No, no, no. I *respect* you most *awfully*, and we're just great friends and I want you to—oh well, anyway, it's settled, isn't it? . . . Good—I quite appreciate the point—I do really. The mater will be delighted—dear old mater! . . . Yes, I feel sure the governor will be delighted; it was he who first suggested it. (*Greatly confused.*) Well—er—Good-bye—dear. . . . What? . . . Of course, I forgot. Oh, well, you'll choose it. I don't know what you like—something with diamonds, I suppose? . . . What? Oh, *amethysts*! Yes, I know—green stones. Well, good-bye—dear! To-morrow

at four. . . . No, I can't in the morning.—Publishers in the morning. Yes. Good-bye—dear! (*He puts up receiver.*) Phew!!! (*Mops his forehead with his handkerchief.*)

(*Enter MRS. HARGRAVES L.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Well?

EDWARD (*up at 'phone—mopping his head*). She's done it!

MRS. HARGRAVES. Done what? (*Up stage L.C.*)

EDWARD. Said "yes"!

MRS. HARGRAVES (*surprised*). Already? Well, I never. I—— (*Coming down to L.C.*)

EDWARD. I was surprised, mater.

MRS. HARGRAVES (*suppressing her real feelings, comes to L.C.*). It just shows what a nice sensible girl she is.

EDWARD. She seemed to be expecting it.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Oh, did she?

EDWARD. Do they always expect—I mean, well, old darling, never mind, I've done it now.

MRS. HARGRAVES (*tearfully*). Oh, my dear, I wish you knew a little more. (*Head on his shoulder.*)

EDWARD. Why, mater darling, why are you crying?

MRS. HARGRAVES (*recovering*). Never ask a woman that.

EDWARD. Why now?

MRS. HARGRAVES (*dabbing her eyes*). Oh, bless the boy—because she can't always tell you. (*Goes to settee, picks up paper and sits down.*)

EDWARD (*looking round room*). I suppose I'll have to clear out of this. It's a jolly little flat.

MRS. HARGRAVES. It's not nearly big enough. (*Listening.*) What was that?

EDWARD. What? (*Up to window.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. I thought I heard a noise. (*Up to EDWARD.*)

(They listen.)

EDWARD. It's nothing.

MRS. HARGRAVES *(at window)*. I never feel safe with these fire-escapes.

EDWARD. You'd feel a lot more nervous without them.

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear boy, I may be old-fashioned, but I'd far rather risk being burnt than being burgled.

EDWARD. Oh, nobody's going to burgle you, darling. *(Whistles a few notes of "The Wedding-March.")*

MRS. HARGRAVES. Oh, don't do that, it's so unlucky. I'm going to bed, Edward. *(Coming down R.)* You can see me up to our flat—I'll walk up—I hate lifts.

EDWARD. Right oh, mother. *(Down R.C.)*

MRS. HARGRAVES *(at R. door)*. You know, dear, I'm much happier about you. After all, Evangeline's better than no one.

EDWARD. That's all right, dear mater.

(Exit Mrs. HARGRAVES and EDWARD R.)

(After they have gone, there is a pause. Then enter ANN quickly, window R., with a scream. She comes down to C. Finding no one in the room, she gives a little chuckle and looks around. She sees photos at desk; goes up and picks up the DEAN'S photo.)

ANN. Father! Dear sweet old parson! *(Picks up photo of MRS. HARGRAVES.)* Mother! She's just fine!

(Comes down C., sees EVANGELINE'S photo on mantel; crosses to it and picks it up.)

Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prisms!

(Up to door L.U., opens it a little way and then shuts it quickly.)

Author's bedroom!

(Hears EDWARD whistling off and exit ANN quickly through window.)

Enter EDWARD R. He comes slowly over to fireplace and picks up EVANGELINE'S photo.)

EDWARD (looking round the room, rather ruefully). It's a jolly little flat.

(Enter ANN through window precisely as before, with a long scream comes down c.)

(Putting photo down). What the—what's the matter?

ANN (acting for all she is worth). Oh, oh—oh my! (With her skirts tightly tucked round her.)

EDWARD. What on earth's the matter?

ANN. Oh—oh—I do hope it didn't get in!

EDWARD. What was it?

ANN. A mouse!

EDWARD (relieved). A mouse! Is that all! I keep them!

(ANN makes a dash for the window.)

(With a grin.) White ones—down in the country.

(ANN sighs with relief and turns from the window and comes down c. slowly, looking at EDWARD.)

(Curiously, when ANN is well down stage.) I say, haven't I seen you before?

ANN (laughing). You've heard me—— (Thinking.) Let me see—yes, six times to-day, and you've rudely refused——

EDWARD (interrupting). Then you're——

ANN (nods her head). I'm the American interviewer—I'm a business woman; that's why I invented the mouse.

EDWARD. You invented the mouse?

ANN. So as not to shock you with my apparent unconventionality. Besides, it's your own fault—you've been very stubborn.

EDWARD (L.C., *nervously*). Have I; I—I'm sorry.

ANN. I was obliged to see you anyhow—on another matter. (*Goes up and puts book on table R.*)

EDWARD. Oh—what? (*Nervously.*)

ANN (R.C.). If you were to throw a bucket or two of water over me now, you'd probably recognize me.

EDWARD. By Jove, you're not the girl who—

ANN. Who made a most complete fool of herself at Henley yesterday— (*Coming over to EDWARD and impulsively holding out her hand.*) Thank you so much, Mr. Englishman.

EDWARD (*awkwardly*). Oh, it was nothing!

ANN (*rather huffily*). Nothing! Well, perhaps not for you.

EDWARD. I mean—of course, it was awful for you, but nothing to me—

ANN (*laughing*). Gee! I must have looked cute on the end of that pole. (*More seriously.*) You'll let me interview you, won't you?

EDWARD. I can't help myself.

ANN. How did you like my criticism?

EDWARD. You?

ANN. In the "New Eye Witness."

EDWARD. Oh, you were the—

ANN (C.). Yes. Have you ever been on a honeymoon?

EDWARD (L.C.). Good Lord, no!

ANN. I'm glad.

EDWARD. Why?

ANN. Because there's some excuse for your ignorance.

EDWARD. Oh, thank you.

ANN (*up to EDWARD*). But there's no excuse for your writing about a thing like a honeymoon if you've never tried it.

EDWARD. An author often has to draw upon his imagination.

ANN. Not about a beautiful, sacred thing like a honeymoon. It's vandalism—sheer vandalism. A

honeymoon is just as sacred and wonderful to me as a very beautiful baby all just new and crimply. (*Suddenly and vigorously, backing EDWARD to L.*) Don't you ever dare to describe a very new baby until you've thoroughly mastered all its loveliest points,

EDWARD (*nervously*). No, no, certainly not.

ANN. You're just the sort of person who would try and do a silly thing like that. Remember, you've spoiled Hannah's Honeymoon and you simply can't spoil her baby.

(*Forcing EDWARD to fender, where he sits.*)

EDWARD. I shouldn't think of it!

ANN (*looking at him curiously, then coming to chair C.*) You're just exactly what I expected from the book.

EDWARD. I—I'm—glad—I came up to your expectations.

ANN (*sits on chair C.*). Why do you write so well—and so badly? I love the book—in parts.

EDWARD. Thank you.

ANN. Tell me, where on earth did you pick up that mass of muddled information about women?

EDWARD (*rises and goes up to her*). The fact of the matter is—I'll tell you—I don't know enough about women!

ANN. I don't want being told—it's so self-evident. (*Gently and wonderingly.*) It's how you managed to live to years of maturity in such appalling ignorance that tickles me.

EDWARD. Well, I did, that's all.

ANN. Ever kissed a girl?

EDWARD. I—I——

ANN (*promptly*). No, you haven't. If you said you had, I wouldn't believe it.

EDWARD. Why? (*Sits on arm of settee.*)

ANN. Because— (*rises, gets book and returns to chair. Turning over the pages of the book.*)—you described a kiss. Yes, here it is, I marked the place. "Hannah's Honeymoon," page 62.

(*Quoting.*) 'His lips touched her cheek for one brief moment—and he knew that he loved her.' (*Raises her eyes to Heaven, then looks at EDWARD.*)

EDWARD. Well, what's wrong?

ANN (*wonderingly*). Aren't you just an infant? Who ever heard of a kiss lasting a moment teaching a man a whole lifetime of love?

EDWARD. I don't quite—

ANN (*interposing*). Why don't you see it was a long kiss that was wanted—a *real, long, thrilling* kiss—not a peck, as if he was saying good-night to his sister. What do you suppose a peck on the cheek like that could possibly convey?

EDWARD. I don't know—

ANN (*looking up at him whimsically*). You know, I rather like you for it.

EDWARD. Why?

ANN (*turning to the book*). Never mind—now look at this. You make your heroine recover from a whole rush of tears before she's had time to really enjoy half the flood.

EDWARD. But surely—

ANN (*interposing*). A girl who'd turn on the tap like that wouldn't let up for at least ten or fifteen minutes. Your ignorance is simply appalling.

EDWARD. Well, I'm *learning*, that's clear. (*Rises, goes to fender.*)

ANN. Ever been engaged?

EDWARD. No, but— (*Looks at photograph of EVANGELINE.*)

ANN. Of course, you've never kissed a girl—

EDWARD. Er—I *am* engaged! (*Turns to her.*)

ANN. What? (*Rises, puts book down.*)

EDWARD. I got engaged to-night, as a matter of fact. . . .

ANN (*disappointed*). You got engaged to-night?

EDWARD. It's a fact.

ANN. But how on earth did you get through without kissing her?

EDWARD. Er—telephone—— (*Indicating telephone.*)

ANN. Tel—oh my! (*Roars with laughter—goes up and then down stage.*)

EDWARD. What are you laughing at?

ANN (*stops laughing*). You mean to say you lost just the sweetest, finest, loveliest moment of your life over an old telephone?

EDWARD. I—I'm very sorry, but I did.

ANN. And the girl let you do it?

EDWARD. I suppose it was my fault.

ANN. Did it on the spur of the moment?

EDWARD. Exactly!

ANN. And she accepted you?

EDWARD. Yes.

ANN. What an awful future you've got to face!

EDWARD (*nervously*). Why an *awful* future?

ANN. A girl who'd say "yes" over a telephone unless she was dying or unless she—oh, my gracious, what's she like?

EDWARD. She's—— (*Suddenly.*) I'll fetch her—I'll fetch her. (*Getting photograph from mantel.*)

ANN. I thought so. There they are—all five: papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prisms! My poor boy, you'll never even write another bad novel. Where does she live?

EDWARD. She's a—— But why should I tell you? (*Takes photo from ANN.*)

ANN. Oh, Mr. Englishman, don't start *highbrow* talk; things are far too serious.

EDWARD. Well, she's a Canon's daughter, and I've known her all my life. She's been brought up in a Cathedral town. She's awfully clean and tidy——

ANN. That is some excuse, I suppose.

EDWARD. It's narrowing. (*Going L.*)

ANN. Do you love her?

EDWARD (*thinking a moment*). No, I can't say I do. (*Puts photo on mantel.*)

ANN. Then what in the world—*why did you?*

EDWARD (L.) To tell you the honest truth, my dear old mother, who's the greatest woman I've ever met—

ANN (*running over to him impulsively*). I like that—go on.

EDWARD. No, but she's really a very clever woman; and she's been going for me about the book, and in fact told me a lot you've just been rubbing in; so, to settle matters, I said I'd get engaged—er—to learn—er—I mean—

ANN (*clapping her hands and going over to R.*) Oh, aren't you just lovely! The true artist sacrifices his life to the cause of art!

EDWARD. Well, to be quite honest, it's not—

ANN. Yes, it is; a nice, funny old thing like you can't be allowed to do it. *She'll* never help you. (*Sitting on R. arm of settee.*)

EDWARD (*down L.*). How do you know?

ANN. Don't I tell you a girl who'd say "yes" over a 'phone—a nasty, cold, old 'phone—can't understand—anything.

EDWARD. She's quite a nice girl.

ANN. *Nice!* You don't want a "*nice*" girl!

EDWARD. How d'you mean?

ANN. Oh, how you'd know things if you'd been nearer nature. How I'd like to gallop you across a prairie—how you'd just love it! The wind and the breath of the long grass filling your body with life; and the spirit of the wilderness, filling your heart and soul full of the passionate joy that makes you shout aloud—Life! Love! Love—Life! They're one—one—whooppee! (*Indian whoop.*)

EDWARD (*dashing across to door R.*). I say, look out!

ANN (*contemptuously*). Loving by telephone! You! If it weren't so tragic, it'd be comic.

EDWARD (*sitting in armchair R.*). I've done it now.

ANN. And you'll stick to it?

EDWARD. Of course.

ANN. Oh, silly man! (*Sits on L. end of settee.*)
Come and sit over here.

(EDWARD *hesitates and looks shy.*)

(*Repeated.*) Come and sit over here!

(EDWARD *shuffles about, rises, comes R.C. and stops again.*)

Come along!

(*He sits by ANN. Bus. of moving up to him repeated three times.*)

Now listen to your little American friend.

EDWARD (*unfreezing*). I'm listening.

ANN. You're going to spoil your life if you marry this cold, dry English girl, that was just made to marry a curate. Can't you imagine something of the girl who'd help you? Later on you'll be nervy and jerky over your work—just when you're feeling your wings and want to do your great book; and then that insipid girl you married won't know quite how to fix things, and you'll just want sympathy so badly, you'll cry.

EDWARD. A man doesn't cry.

ANN. My! Don't they! Some of the nicest men I've ever met could cry at times like little children. (*Laying her hand on his.*)

EDWARD. You're very kind, (*Looking down at hand.*) and sympathetic.

ANN. I'm glad you think so, because I'm trying very hard to help you.

EDWARD (*nervously*). It's getting rather late, isn't it?

ANN. Don't spoil things, Mr. Englishman—let them soak in awhile. I'd love you to know there's just one woman you've met who's taught you just a little about women.

EDWARD. Would you mind telling me some more?
(*Sniffing her hair.*)

ANN (*after a little silent chuckle*). Do you know something?

EDWARD. No, tell me. (*Sniffing*.)

ANN. You'll never divulge it to a living soul if I tell you?

EDWARD (*rather priggishly*). Are you sure it's something that you *should* tell me?

ANN (*mock seriousness*). I feel that I can trust you.

EDWARD. If you are quite sure that you won't regret telling me—do: you *may* trust me—utterly. (*Sniffing*.)

ANN (*impressively*). Well—it's disgraceful, but I paid five and a half dollars a bottle for that perfume you're so rapturously inhaling from my hair.

EDWARD (*straightening up awkwardly*). Really, as much as that!

ANN (*laughs merrily*). Oh, Mr. Englishman, you're too good to be true. What's the girl's name?

EDWARD. Evangeline.

ANN. About the only romantic thing about her.

EDWARD. What's your name?

ANN (*contemptuously*). Ann. The *least* romantic thing about *me*.

EDWARD (*trying to be polite*). Ann—it's——

ANN. No, it isn't. It's a fool-name—reminiscent of old-maid aunts!

EDWARD. I don't think so.

ANN. It is. What's your name?

EDWARD. Edward.

ANN. I guess we're not a very romantic combination in names.

EDWARD (*dreamily*). No.

ANN. Listen! (*There is a long pause.*) You'd love to kiss me, wouldn't you?

EDWARD. My dear girl!!!—I mean——

ANN. I'm not saying I'd let you.

EDWARD. I—I didn't say I wanted to.

ANN. Then don't. (*Face close to his, and looking straight at him.*)

EDWARD (*nervously*). I won't.

ANN. You mustn't! (*Putting her mouth close to his.*)

EDWARD (*without moving*). How could I? (*Looks at EVANGELINE'S picture awkwardly.*)

ANN (*laughing*). How could you! Oh, my, Mr. Englishman, I like you.

(EDWARD *suddenly looks at his watch and rises.*)

What's the matter?

EDWARD. Suppose my dear old dad comes in and finds you here?

ANN. Oh joy—oh rapture!

EDWARD (*comes c.*) I wonder what the mater would say.

ANN. I think she'd just love it. (*Rises.*)

EDWARD. I believe you're right.

ANN. Honestly, am I helping you, or would you like me to go? (*Comes L.C.*)

EDWARD. I wouldn't *like* you to go, but you must!

ANN. Why?

EDWARD. Because—because—hang it all! I—I—

ANN (*leading EDWARD to photo of EVANGELINE*)
What do you suppose *she* would think if she saw us?

EDWARD. Evangeline?

(ANN *nods her head solemnly.*)

Heaven alone knows!

ANN (L.). I'll tell you.

EDWARD. What?

ANN. She'd just be ignorantly—shocked!

EDWARD. Ignorantly!

ANN. A woman who'd say "yes" over a telephone, would be ignorantly shocked. She'd jump to conclusions like a very active kangaroo.

EDWARD. How much did you say that scent cost?

ANN (*sharply*). You're not thinking of giving "Prunes" any, are you?

EDWARD. No, no, not "Prunes"—I mean, Vangy.

ANN (*decidedly*). I couldn't stand for that.

EDWARD. I only thought I'd like to have some myself.

ANN (*brightly*). I'll send you a bottle (*close to EDWARD*) for a wedding present. (*Crosses up to window.*) I must go.

EDWARD. Oh, I say, don't go yet!

ANN. I must. I want to write you up while you're fresh in my mind.

EDWARD. You're never going to——!

ANN (*up c.*). It's been a very interesting interview.

(*Lift-bell heard off.*)

EDWARD (*as he hears some one outside*). Good Lord, there's my dad! (*Rushing over to door R.*)

ANN (*smiling*). I'd just love to meet him.

EDWARD (*at door R.*). But you—I mean—good Heavens, if he found you here! I say, what the deuce—look here, d'you mind going——?

ANN (*going to window*). Of course.

EDWARD (*going towards her hurriedly*). No, no! He'll see you there from the staircase.

ANN (*enjoying his panic*). Well, in there. (*Going towards bedroom.*)

EDWARD (*rushes towards her and stops c. up stage*). No, no, not there, that's my—my——

ANN (*understandingly*). Oh, that's all right. (*As she exits.*) I'll just make some notes on an English author's bedroom.

(*Exit ANN L.*)

(*Enter DEAN R.*)

EDWARD (*nervously*). Hullo, dad. I'd——

DEAN (*beamingly*). My dear lad!

EDWARD. I thought you'd gone to bed. I—I—was just turning in——

DEAN (R.C.). Your mother has told me. I couldn't possibly retire without (*Taking his hand*) offering you my warmest congratulations. God bless you, my boy.

EDWARD (L.C., *unenthusiastically*). Thank you, dad!

DEAN. Your dear mother and I are indeed thankful to Providence for this sudden fulfilment of our most earnest wishes——

EDWARD. I thought you said there was plenty of time. (*Down L.*)

DEAN. Did I? Ah, yes, to be sure. But we're grateful it has not been longer. Evangeline is a girl with a thousand—I mean, in a thousand.

EDWARD. She is!

DEAN. Her income, with yours—but there, we must not expatiate on the loaves and fishes. They are there! Suffice it to know—they are there!

EDWARD. Of course, you know, I don't love Evangeline in quite the conventional sense.

DEAN (*impressively, and coming over to EDWARD L.*). My dear boy, your mother and I fully appreciate your difficulties—difficulties inherited possibly from myself. Between ourselves—entirely between ourselves—I never loved your dear mother in quite the conventional sense. But look at the result.

EDWARD (*smothering a laugh*). Yes, dad!

DEAN (*sermonizing*). Harmony! Complete harmony, based on common sense and daily intercourse.

EDWARD. I wonder if——

DEAN (*sermonically*). Intimacy, intimacy, my dear boy, intimacy is the soil for a common-sense marriage! In intimacy the little seed of love takes root slowly but surely. In intimacy it blossoms forth like a grain of mustard seed.

(During this speech, EDWARD makes repeated little attempts to stop the DEAN.)

EDWARD (*sighs*). Yes, dad—er—you said all that last Sunday!

DEAN. Did I? Well, there—there—we'll defer discussing the ethics of love and marriage until you have become a little more intimate. Now, I must go to bed—— (*Pausing.*) Dear me, what a delicious perfume there is in the room. (*He sniffs.*) Delicious!

EDWARD (*starts*). Yes!

DEAN. I never noticed it before I went out.

EDWARD. No—no—you wouldn't. It's a—a—new hair-wash I'm trying.

DEAN (*up stage R., delighted*). Hair-wash! My boy, I must try it—it's delicious! Could you let me have a little? I suffer slightly from dryness of the scalp.

(DEAN goes towards bedroom. EDWARD jumps over settee and stops him.)

EDWARD. It's very bad for that. (*Bringing him down L.*)

DEAN (*L.C.*). A pity—a pity—a great pity. Well, good-night, my boy! Good-night and God bless you, and keep you from all temptation.

(On the word "temptation," EDWARD turns his head and gives a quick look towards bedroom L.)

EDWARD. Good-night, dad!

DEAN (*by the door*). You're quite sure that hair-wash does induce dryness?

EDWARD. Quite, dad, quite!

DEAN. Pity—great pity! I must get your dear mother to try it first. Good-night.

(Exit DEAN R.)

(EDWARD carefully shuts the door, then sits C. and mops

his face with his handkerchief. Enter ANN L., notebook in hand, smilingly intent on what she has put down.)

ANN. Well? (*Coming c.*)

EDWARD (*starting up and creeping over to door R.*). We must be careful! My dad came in to congratulate me.

ANN (*enigmatically*). Maybe! (*Goes L.C.*)

EDWARD (*L.C.*). "Maybe"? I don't quite—

ANN (*shutting him up*). Never mind. I've made some lovely copy out of your bedroom.

EDWARD (*staggered*). Copy out of my bedroom? (*Up stage R.*)

ANN (*suddenly amused*). "Notes on an English Author's Bedroom." (*Referring to notebook.*) "Doesn't use a comb. Doesn't get his suit pressed often enough. Doesn't use hair-wash. Boots very badly cleaned—query, does he do it himself?" Do you?

EDWARD. Yes.

ANN. I thought so. It's an art in my country.

EDWARD (*a trifle indignant*). Indeed? (*Down R.C.*)

ANN (*referring to book*). "Doesn't wear sleeping suits." (*To EDWARD.*) You must look cute in that flannelette night-shirt.

EDWARD. Look here, I call this simply outrageous!

ANN. So do I! Artistically outrageous!

EDWARD (*almost speechless*). I—I say— (*Up stage.*)

ANN (*coolly*). You'd wear sleeping suits if I married you.

EDWARD. Don't be indelicate! (*Up by window.*)

ANN (*steadily*). Prunes probably won't mind.

EDWARD. Well, I—

ANN (*closing book*). It will work up nicely into a half column.

EDWARD. You never mean to say you're going to publish all these details! (*Down to chair.*)

ANN. You bet your dear life I am! (*Crossing EDWARD up to window.*)

EDWARD (*desperately*). What about—I mean, you—I say, you won't put in the conversation we had——

ANN (*up stage R.C. Meaningly and seriously*). I trust I quite understand the meaning of true delicacy.

EDWARD (*down L.C., rather crushed*). I'm—I'm so awfully sorry.

ANN (*coming right down to him, and looking up in his face*). Ba-by! (*Upward inflection.*)

EDWARD (*staring at her*). By Jove, you're an amazing girl!

ANN. Tell me—have I helped you?

EDWARD. I'd love you to meet my mother.

ANN. And I'd just love to meet her.

EDWARD. Couldn't you come in to-morrow?

ANN. Bully! (*Down R.*) But how are you going to explain me?

EDWARD (*doubtfully*). Hum!

ANN (*exactly the same inflection*). Hum!

EDWARD. I tell you what! (*Sits on arm of chair c.*) Send up your card and ask for an interview. They'll think no end of it.

ANN. Is she going to be there—"Prunes and Prisms"?

EDWARD. Yes, I'm afraid "Prunes"—(*jumping up*)—I mean "Prisms"—I mean Vangy will be here.

ANN. I'd love to come. (*Crosses to mantel L. and looks at EVANGELINE'S photo.*) I'd just love to see the girl you're *not* going to marry.

EDWARD. "Not going to marry"?

ANN (*decisively*). I'm going to help you right out of it.

EDWARD. What do you mean? (*Sits on chair c.*)

ANN (*sits on R. arm of settee*). I simply refuse to allow it. Look here, you've struck an awful snag!

EDWARD. A snag?

ANN. Yes—you're just like a nice, new, white-sailed vessel that's never known a real tough breeze. Don't you see you're built for storms and headwinds and the mastering of them ; not just the calm waters of a summer day ? Here you are, sailing right out of harbour and in sheer ignorance of how to navigate your own course you've hit a snag ! (*With a little laugh.*) The little tug "American Ann" is going to tow you off—right into harbour.

(*She takes hold of EDWARD'S two hands and pulls him round and down R.*)

EDWARD. Yes, but why do you want to do this ? (*Taking away his hands and backing a step.*)

(*Warning for curtain.*)

ANN (*to herself—aloud*). Shall I tell him ?

EDWARD (*eagerly*). Yes.

ANN (*crisply*). No, perhaps I'd better not. (*Goes up stage to window, gets on to seat and out on balcony.*)

EDWARD (*up to her*). But I want to know !

ANN (*on balcony*). Oh, do you ? (*Rather cheekily.*)

EDWARD (*still more eager*). Yes !

ANN (*tantalizingly*). You'd really like to know ? (*Hands each side of window.*)

EDWARD (*very strong*). Please !

ANN. Well, maybe—— !

EDWARD (*breathless with interest*). Yes—"Maybe" ?

ANN. Maybe I'll marry you myself !

(*ANN disappears quickly, laughing, to R. EDWARD rushes up to window, and leans far out, looking after her.*)

(CURTAIN.)

(END OF ACT I.)

ACT II

SCENE.—Same as ACT I.

An afternoon tea-table set for tea, stands C. in front of armchair. Fire lighted.

At rise of curtain the stage is empty. Enter EDWARD R. He comes to settee with parcel, and takes off hat and gloves. Opens parcel, takes out pyjamas, tries them on, opens bottle of hair-wash, shakes some on hand and compares it with cushion. Rises, looks everywhere for comb and at last finds it in his inner coat pocket. Shakes hair-wash on hair, then goes to fireplace and elaborately parts hair. Then gathers things up and goes off L. Returns immediately and comes to desk. Gets duster and dusts boots. Sees five cups on table, counts on his fingers then goes to book-case and gets extra cup, dusts it with same duster. Sees what he is doing, is horrified, takes cup back to bookcase and changes it for another. Gets kettle from window and puts it on hob. Takes photo of EVANGELINE, dusts it, puts it back, sits on settee, smells cushion. Looks at photo, puts his hat on and exits R.)

(Exit EDWARD L.)

(Enter ANN from window with bundle. She puts things on armchair. Takes slippers up and puts them under chair R. Blouse on chair L. of desk, stockings under cushion R. of settee, nightdress under cushion L. of settee. Takes candy from one of the dishes and pops it in her mouth.)

ANN (c.). I guess that will about do it—Maybe!

(Exit ANN by window R.)

(Enter BILLY and EDWARD R. BILLY goes over to L.C.)

EDWARD (R.C.). Jolly glad you've turned up. Why didn't you look in last night?

BILLY (L.C.). Well, I saw your dad to the door, and then I bolted back to make some rough sketches. *(Sniffs the air.)*

EDWARD. They ought to be here soon.

BILLY *(sniffing)*. What the—I say, who's been——
(Sniffs.) Can't you smell something? *(Sniffs.)*

EDWARD *(nervously)*. Smell? Smell what?

BILLY. Scent. Ripping good scent, too! *(Sniffing.)*

EDWARD *(sniffing.)* Now you mention it—I—I think I do. *(Duster to nose.)*

(BUS.: BILLY indicates duster. EDWARD throws it away with an exclamation of disgust.)

BILLY *(suspiciously)*. I say, Teddy, who's been paying you a visit?

EDWARD *(uneasily)*. Paying me a visit?

BILLY. You don't mean to say you've done it!

EDWARD. Done what?

BILLY. Edward, I believe you're a dark old horse after all.

EDWARD *(rather confused)*. Don't be an ass. *(Crossing to fireplace.)*

BILLY *(tracking scent to settee)*. Warm! Warmer! Warmer! Teddy, she's been sitting *here*! *(Sitting on settee.)*

EDWARD *(desperately)*. Look here, old man, I'll tell you, but for heaven's sake keep it to yourself.

BILLY *(grinning)*. Now we're talking!

EDWARD. Last night after you were gone, I proposed to—er——

BILLY (*astonished*). *Proposed? Who to?*

EDWARD (*taking up photo*). I proposed to Evangeline.

BILLY. Evangeline? When did *she* turn up?

EDWARD. Well, the fact of the matter is, I did it over the telephone.

BILLY. You would!

EDWARD. And she accepted me.

BILLY. The deuce she did.

EDWARD. The mater was delighted. Dear old mater!

BILLY. Yes, but what I want to know is—when did the scent come in?

EDWARD. Later!

BILLY. Later! (*With a grin*.) Gather round!

EDWARD. After I'd seen the mater upstairs to her flat, I walked in here and found—

BILLY (*excitedly*). The girl with the scent?

EDWARD. Exactly!

BILLY. Immense!

EDWARD. She came through the window.

BILLY (*astounded, looks round at window R.*). What!

EDWARD. From the next flat along the fire escape.

BILLY. And you sent her back home again like a good little boy? (*Pats EDWARD on shoulder.*)

EDWARD (*indignantly*). No, I jolly well didn't.

BILLY. You didn't! (*Springs up and grasps EDWARD's hand with fervour.*) Edward, old man, my warmest and sincerest congratulations. (*Shaking hands vigorously.*)

EDWARD. Don't be an ass. (*Crossing to R.C.*) She was only a mad American—a newspaper reporter; and, incidentally, the girl I lugged out of the water at Henley.

BILLY. What! That topping little girl a newspaper reporter?

EDWARD. I suppose it accounts for her eccentric behaviour.

BILLY. My dear old chap, the more attractive the girl the more eccentric can she become to the unsophisticated male mind.

EDWARD. Can she? (*Goes up to desk at back c., gets golf club and sand paper.*)

BILLY. Yes! It's all the outcome of habit. Woman is a habit. She may be a bad habit or a good habit—but she's always a habit.

EDWARD. Eh? (*Coming down R.C.*)

BILLY. Lucky devil—what a delightful lot of things you've got to learn about the habit!

EDWARD (*R.C., polishing golf-stick*). I wish to goodness I'd started investigations earlier in life. I found her very instructive—

BILLY. No, old man, not *instructive*—never apply the term *instructive* to a woman nowadays.

EDWARD. Why not?

BILLY. Because, my dear old chap, the only term to apply to a woman nowadays is *destructive*—or *constructive*—or *obstructive*—but never *instructive*! However, you found little Stars and Stripes interesting?

EDWARD. She was—very interesting; and I asked her to tea to meet the mater.

BILLY (*knowingly*). Oh, *did* you?

EDWARD (*trying to explain things away*). Yes, I thought I ought to be polite. (*Comes R.C.*)

BILLY. Of course! Of course! (*Bursts out laughing.*) I say, have you told Evangeline about this?

EDWARD. Good Lord, no; she'd never understand—I mean, not yet.

BILLY. Edward, I'm sure you *are* a dark old horse after all.

EDWARD. Oh, rot! Now remember, I shall pretend not to know her, except as an interviewer.

BILLY. Of course—of course! (*Bursts out laughing at EDWARD.*)

EDWARD. And I wish to goodness you wouldn't

try to imply anything that isn't—I mean, that doesn't—doesn't—

BILLY (*breaking in*). Don't stutter, old man; you're only giving yourself away. Anything that isn't suggested by one of the most delicate and expensive perfumes on the market.

EDWARD. Oh, shut up! (*Goes down R.*)

BILLY. I say, Teddy, have you seen Evangeline since she accepted you?

EDWARD. No, she's coming to tea this afternoon. I couldn't see her this morning—busy this morning—publishers this morning.

BILLY. Oh, she's coming to tea this afternoon? And the little American girl is coming to tea this afternoon? Well, of course, I quite see I'm going to have the afternoon of my life. (*Rises and goes to fireplace. Stands with back to fire, laughing.*)

(*A knock at the door.*)

EDWARD. There she is, I expect. (*Very pleased.*)

BILLY (*laughing*). Yes, "there she is";—er—*which one?*

EDWARD (*downcast*). "Which one"? (*Pause.*) Oh, I'll see.

(*EDWARD goes to door R. and opens it. Enter EVANGELINE. She stands just inside door.*)

EDWARD. Oh, how do you do?

EVANGELINE (*to EDWARD—primly*). How do you do? (*To BILLY.*) How do you do? (*Stiffly.*) Oh, I think I'm too early. (*Crosses front of EDWARD to R.C.*)

EDWARD. No, no—not at all—Billy's here to chaperone us.

EVANGELINE. Oh, perhaps I'd better wait outside for Mrs. Hargraves.

BILLY (*to EVANGELINE; rather nervously—obviously afraid of her*). It's all right, Miss Lipscomb; I'm

here, and—you're here—and—er—we're all there—er—I mean, we're all here! I'll just nip up and let Mrs. Hargraves know you *are* here. How d'you do, again! (*Shakes hands with EVANGELINE, and crosses her, so that he is between her and EDWARD. He notices EDWARD and suddenly remembers his manners.*) Oh, I'm so sorry—quite forgot. Hearty congrats., and—er—many happy returns and a merry Christmas—

(*Exit BILLY pushed out by EDWARD, quickly R.*)

(*EVANGELINE goes over to L.C.*)

EDWARD. Oh, won't you sit down?

(*EVANGELINE sits on settee.*)

Is father well?

EVANGELINE. Papa is quite well, thank you.

EDWARD. Thank you. (*Pause.*) (*Very nervously.*) Won't you take off your—er—funny little pale blue waist-coat?

EVANGELINE. No, thanks—it's a little chilly for summer.

EDWARD (*nervous*). Chilly—oh, yes, yes, that's why I had a fire. (*Crosses to window up L. and shuts it.*) There!

EVANGELINE (*after sniffing cushion*). How exceedingly disgusting! Edward!

EDWARD. Yes— (*Pause.*) Dear heart. (*Coming down from window to just above settee.*)

EVANGELINE. D'you like scent, Edward?

EDWARD. Yes—no—yes—no, I mean, yes—some scent. (*Down to back of tea-table.*)

EVANGELINE. I don't like scent, Edward—you'd better know it at once.

EDWARD. Yes—yes, of course; er—I'll make a note of it.

(*There is a very awkward pause.*)

EVANGELINE. I suppose you're very shy now ?

EDWARD (*with slight nervous laugh and absently picking up tea-spoon from table*). I'm, well, you see—it's—the first occasion ; and the first occasion is always a trifle tricky.

EVANGELINE (*deliberately putting up veil*). Don't you think you ought to kiss me ?

(EDWARD *drops spoon into tray*.)

It's usual, isn't it ?

EDWARD. Oh yes, of course. I mean to, but——

(*Comes round front of tea-table and sits beside EVANGELINE.*)

EVANGELINE. It's usual when people are engaged, isn't it ?

EDWARD. Yes.

(EVANGELINE *turns her head round, and puts out her mouth to EDWARD, who, with one finger on her cheek, pushes her head gently round again.*)

EDWARD. For the present, I think—— (*Kisses her.*) For the present——(*Pause.*) Thank you. (*Vigorously polishes golf-stick.*)

EVANGELINE. (*BUS. hand on his to stop him*). I'm so glad you've been honest with me—that's really why I accepted you. You know I don't believe in love—I mean, not the silly sort one reads about—we've discussed it so often. Your book was wrong in places about women, but you're perfectly right, I'm convinced, in the love-scenes.

EDWARD (*a little startled*). Everybody thinks that is just where the book is weak. Now, last night, Ann—— (*Pulls himself up in confusion.*) (*BUS. with emery paper and candy.*)

EVANGELINE. I like the calm sensible way you make your heroine behave. I think I may have helped you without your knowing it.

EDWARD. Perhaps you have. (*Bus. with golf-stick.*)

EVANGELINE (*Bus. with hand*). I think it was so clever of you to write about a honeymoon as you did and that passage about an engagement: "His lips touched her cheek for one brief moment"—

(*Touches her own cheek where EDWARD has kissed her.*)

So true!

EDWARD (*surprised*). Do you think so?

EVANGELINE. It shows me so clearly that you have genius.

EDWARD (*more surprised*). Genius! Of, yes, of course, genius—genius. (*Rather conceitedly. Bus. with golf-stick.*)

EVANGELINE (*stopping him*). Edward, don't do that! Yes! A genius can always write brilliantly, even in cold blood, on any subject, however inexperienced he happens to be. I think it was wonderful how you got it right.

EDWARD (*turning round to her*). But *was* it right?

EVANGELINE. Right—of course it was!

EDWARD. How on earth do you know?

EVANGELINE (*greatly confused*). Oh, well, I—I—of course, I mean it *sounded* right—— (*Desperately.*) Well, how did *you* know?

EDWARD. Oh, *I* made it all up!

EVANGELINE. I'm glad.

EDWARD. Glad—why?

EVANGELINE. Because if I'd thought that this had been from an actual experience—I might have been jealous.

EDWARD (*awkwardly*). Oh—well you—I don't think you have any cause—(*pause*)—dear one——!

EVANGELINE. It has always seemed to me that a really good woman should be as jealous of a man's past as of his future.

EDWARD. Quite so.

EVANGELINE. A good wife should always be jealous, Edward.

EDWARD. Seems a trifle early Victorian, don't it ?
(*Rises, comes C.*)

EVANGELINE. Certainly not. I was always brought up to believe that real love should never be free from jealousy !

EDWARD (*a little dreamily*). And I'd begun to hope it was free from everything save Love.

EVANGELINE. I hope you aren't becoming sentimental.

EDWARD. I wonder if you know what sentiment means ?

(*Voices heard off R.*)

Ah, there's the mater.

EVANGELINE. Oh, I'm so glad.

(*Enter MRS. HARGRAVES R., followed by the DEAN and BILLY.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear boy, I'm afraid we're late. (*Crosses L.C. to EVANGELINE.*) My child, I must apologize. (*Kisses her.*) You've made us so happy. (*Crosses to settee.*)

EVANGELINE. I'm so glad !

DEAN (*C. to EVANGELINE*). My dear—God bless you. I'm overjoyed to think my son has such a suitable helpmeet. (*Solemnly.*) A Ruth to any Boaz ! (*Sits in chair L. corner.*)

EVANGELINE (*with much drawl*). Oh, thank you so much.

BILLY (*R.C.*). Oh ! Now we're all merry and oright ! Now perhaps Edward'll be able to write about women.

EVANGELINE. I think he does, Mr. Lloyd. (*Sits on settee R. end.*)

BILLY, *much subdued, turns up stage R., almost immediately afterwards sitting R.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. But you'll teach him many things a nice girl alone can teach.

(They all settle themselves as they talk. DEAN in chair down L. MRS. HARGRAVES on the settee. EVANGELINE by her side. BILLY in chair R.)

DEAN. I do trust your dear father will be delighted.

EVANGELINE. I'm sure of it. Aunt was so pleased when I told her last night.

MRS. HARGRAVES *(drily)*. Was she? *(To change the subject.)* Isn't that kettle boiling—I'm dying for tea.

EDWARD *(going to fireplace with tea-pot)*. I think it is. *(To EVANGELINE.)* Won't you pour it out,—*(pause)*—dear one?

EVANGELINE. Oh, Mrs. Hargraves ought to do that.

(BILLY discovers ANN's slippers under his chair and picks them up.)

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear, I simply loathe pouring out tea—a parson's wife invariably does.

BILLY *(coming down R. with slippers)*. Hallo, who's been leaving their slippers about?

EVANGELINE. They're a girl's.

BILLY *(cheerfully)*. Yes, aren't they?

EVANGELINE *(looks witheringly at BILLY, then takes one slipper from him and passes it to MRS. HARGRAVES; then takes the other slipper.)*

MRS. HARGRAVES. So they are—how extraordinary!

EDWARD *(at fireplace, with kettle, to MRS. HARGRAVES)*. I expect they're yours, old darling. *(He has his back to them as he bends to pour water into kettle.)*

DEAN. They don't appear to be your size, my dear!

MRS. HARGRAVES. No—they certainly are not *my* slippers.

EDWARD. But who on earth's could they be if they're not yours, mater? (*Brings tea-pot and kettle in front to tea-table c.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES (*laughing*). My dear boy, how on earth can I tell you? (*Sits.*)

EVANGELINE. A very small foot, too.

(EDWARD crosses to DEAN L.)

DEAN (*taking the other*). Very small indeed—very very small indeed; almost Chinese.

(EDWARD takes one slipper from DEAN and crosses R.C. and stands L. of BILLY.)

EVANGELINE. No, American. (*Stands above tea-table and pours out tea.*)

(EDWARD starts.)

BILLY (*brightly*). I know! Perhaps the char lady left them.

(*Knock outside R. door.*)

EDWARD (C.). I wonder who that is?

BILLY (R.C.). Haven't the least idea, old chap. Perhaps it's the owner of the slippers. (*Bursts out laughing and goes up to window.*)

EDWARD. Don't be an ass, Bill. I'll see, dad, I'll see.

(EDWARD opens door R. and enter ANN. *She is very smartly dressed. She pretends not to know EDWARD.*)

ANN (*just inside door*). Are these Mr. Edward Hargraves' Chambers?

EDWARD. Yes, I am Hargraves.

ANN. The author of "Hannah's Honeymoon?"

(MRS. HARGRAVES places shoe on settee.)

EDWARD. Yes.

ANN. I'm an American newspaper woman and I just came to write you up. I wonder if you will be so kind as to grant me an interview?

EDWARD. Oh, won't you come in? (*Bus. indicating room with kettle in left hand—show in right hand.*)

ANN. Oh, but I see you have a party! Perhaps I had better come again.

EDWARD. We shall be delighted, shan't we, mater?

MRS. HARGRAVES (*rising*). Do come in, Miss—
(*Advances C.*)

ANN. Anning. (*Comes R.C. and shakes hands with MRS. HARGRAVES.*)

(*BILLY snatches shoe from EDWARD, and puts it away at back.*)

I'm really pleased to meet the mother of so great an author.

MRS. HARGRAVES. You're very kind, Miss Anning. This is my husband.

(*ANN goes over L. to the DEAN.*)

DEAN. Charmed, my dear young lady, to make your acquaintance. My son is indeed honoured.
(*Shakes hands.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. This is my future daughter-in-law, Miss Lipscombe.

ANN (*to EVANGELINE*). How very interesting! Aren't you just proud of him? (*Shaking hands with EVANGELINE very vigorously, and with both hands.*)

EVANGELINE (*rather haughtily, and taking her hands away*). Why, of course! (*Sits in chair C.*)

EDWARD (*bringing BILLY by arm round to C.*). This is my old pal, Billy—black-and-white artist—you must write him up. (*Bus. spilling water from kettle.*)

ANN. Very pleased to know you, Mr. Billy.

(*They shake hands.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Now, Miss Anning, I'm sure you'd like some tea before—

ANN. I'd just love it! (*To BILLY.*) I'm crazy about your English tea-habit.

(BILLY goes to R. of tea-table. EVANGELINE gives him cup of tea for DEAN, also indicates cake-stand. BILLY takes tea to DEAN.)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Do sit down.

(MRS. HARGRAVES sits L. end of settee. ANN sits R. end.)

ANN (to EVANGELINE). Oh, what am I sitting on ? A real American shoe, by the looks of it.

EVANGELINE. Is it ? We were wondering——

MRS. HARGRAVES. The fact is, Miss Anning, a most curious thing happened just before—— (To EDWARD who hands her tea.) Thank you, son—a most curious thing happened before——

(BILLY hands her cake.)

No, thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

(BILLY retires with cake-stand.)

As I was saying—a most curious——

EDWARD (interrupting). Excuse me, mother. Miss Anning—one ? Two ?

ANN. Three, please.

MRS. HARGRAVES. That shoe is a mystery.

ANN. Really ? You don't say so ?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Yes, we found a pair of them here this——

EDWARD. Miss Anning ! Cake ? Bread ? Butter ? Billy ? Billy !

(BILLY runs round L. with cake-stand.)

ANN. No, thank you.

(BILLY retires crushed.)

I think I'd like, just a candy.

(EDWARD looks at ANN inquiringly.)

A sweet.

(EDWARD *hands plate of sweets.*)

ANN. I'm so sorry I interrupted you!

MRS. HARGRAVES. These shoes were found here in my son's rooms, and there's no explaining their presence.

ANN. Indeed—now that's very interesting. It will make a great headline.

OMNES. A headline?

MRS. HARGRAVES. A headline? I don't understand!

EDWARD (*by tea-table—meaningly*). You wouldn't be so cruel, Miss Anning?

ANN. It would just sell the book like anything, Mr. Hargraves.

DEAN (*putting cup down on fender*). Sell the book? How could the slippers sell the book? (*Taking MRS. HARGRAVES' cup and putting it down on fender.*)

ANN. Why, yes; interviewer finds English Author perplexed. Who left her American footwear behind?

EVANGELINE (*haughtily*). You wouldn't be so vulgar!

ANN. Vulgar! My dear Miss Lipscomb, why vulgar? There's nothing vulgar in a slipper.

MRS. HARGRAVES (*pleasantly*). I think, Miss Anning, it might be as well if you suppressed this little incident.

ANN. Of course, I will if you like; (*to EDWARD*) but how did they get here, Mr. Hargraves? (*Giving her cup to EDWARD.*)

EDWARD (*meaningly*). I can't think! I can't think! (*Stands c., drinking from ANN's cup.*)

ANN. It's quite a predicament—a modern Cinderella and her slippers.

(*During the preceding speech, EVANGELINE has put her cup down and re-arranged the cushions—in doing so, she now unearths the lace blouse.*)

EVANGELINE. Oh, what am I crushing?

ANN (*taking blouse and holding it up*). Just the loveliest skirtwaist in the world.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Good Heavens! (*Takes blouse from ANN.*)

DEAN (*taking blouse from MRS. HARGRAVES*). God bless my soul!

EDWARD. What in Heaven's name——!

EVANGELINE. It's a woman's blouse! (*Rising and getting R.C.*)

ANN. It's too cunning for anything!

BILLY (*convulsed*). Edward, you'd look topping in it.

EVANGELINE. Edward—what does it mean?

DEAN. It's really very, very extraordinary.

EVANGELINE. Very!

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear boy—— (*She laughs.*) You haven't been buying Evangeline's trousseau?

(*BILLY bursts out laughing.*)

EDWARD. Of course not, mater.

ANN (*quite seriously*). I never was so tempted in all my life.

(*Everybody looks at her.* MRS. HARGRAVES *laughs softly.*)

OMNES. Tempted!

EVANGELINE. Tempted! What do you mean?

ANN. Just think of the copy I can't use—it's worth at least two hundred and fifty dollars.

EVANGELINE. Miss Anning, I can't see any joke in this at all! You appear to forget that I am engaged to Mr. Hargraves.

ANN. I wish I *could* forget it; when I think of all the copy just throwing itself at me—— (*ANN picks up cushion and discloses stockings, which MRS. HARGRAVES picks up.*)

BILLY. By Jove, another find!

MRS. HARGRAVES (*collapsing into uncontrollable mirth*). My dear Edward, an enemy has done this!

DEAN. But what are they? (*Takes stockings from MRS. HARGRAVES.*) What on earth——!

EVANGELINE (*severely*). They're stockings!

ANN. Looks like a real bully pair of French silk!

(EDWARD *stands choking.*)

EVANGELINE (*to BILLY*). If you did this as a practical joke, Mr. Lloyd, let me tell you it's exceedingly horrid of you.

BILLY. Oh, I say, do I look as if I could?

MRS. HARGRAVES (*laughing*). On your honour, Billy? (*Goes c., then up stage R.C.*)

BILLY. I've never seen such things before! (*Explodes with laughter, turns up a little, then down again.*)

(EVANGELINE *and* MRS. HARGRAVES *at window.*)

ANN. Say, this is just too cute for anything. D'you know, the situation alone, cabled in a dozen words to the Associated Press, would work up into a corking three column story.

DEAN (*stiffly*). Personally, I think this beyond a joke, madam. That this feminine—I think one might be right in describing this as *intimate feminine* attire—has been discovered in my son's room—is—— (*Severely.*) (*Going up behind settee.*) Edward, I must really in common decency——

(ANN *moves over to L. end of settee.*)

EVANGELINE (*furious*). Don't ask him to explain! It's absolutely outrageous—outrageous!!

ANN. I think if I were engaged to a man, Miss Lipscomb, I should feel a bit like that myself.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Edward, have you no idea where those things came from?

(ANN *places cushion behind her back, disclosing nighty.*)

DEAN (*snappishly*). No reasonable explanation of their appearances?

EDWARD. None at all!

(ANN *deliberately, without looking at it, moves night-dress farther down on to seat.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Well, my dear boy, don't look so fearfully tragic. It's just some foolish joke!

EVANGELINE. Joke!

ANN (*unearthing the nightdress and showing it*). My!!!!

PICTURE :

(DEAN *holds nightdress by one end, ANN by the other. EDWARD sinks into chair C.*)

EVANGELINE (*sternly, to EDWARD*). Edward, you know what *that* is?

DEAN (*taking it from ANN*). It appears to be——

MRS. HARGRAVES. It's a very lovely one!

ANN. Now, a nighty like that would cost at least thirty-five dollars.

EVANGELINE. Well, I must say good-bye, Mrs. Hargraves. (*Holding out her hand to MRS. HARGRAVES.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear Evangeline, don't be ridiculous! Don't go!

EVANGELINE. I'm very, very sorry, but it's quite impossible for me to—to—— (To EDWARD) Oh, *can't you see?*

EDWARD (*rises*). But, hang it all—it isn't mine! I mean—I don't know where——

DEAN. But surely you have some theory—this garment is—— Well, it is!!!

BILLY (*to ANN*). What's your theory, Miss Ann-ing?

ANN. Well, as a stranger, I don't know that I ought to say anything; but it seems to me to be a very big tragedy for you, Mr. Hargraves.

EDWARD (*with suppressed rage*). Oh, it's just some feeble—joke! Feeble! Feeble! (*Turns up to window.*)

EVANGELINE. I can stand no more ! Edward has behaved abominably ; will you see me home ?

BILLY (*going up to EVANGELINE*). Well, I think I go your way——

EVANGELINE (*turning on him furiously*). Will you kindly mind your own business ?

BILLY (*quite crushed*). Perhaps you're right.

(*Exit BILLY quickly R.*)

DEAN. My dear, I quite understand. (*Coming down to R. corner with EVANGELINE. BUS. with nightdress.*)

EDWARD. Evangeline ! (*Coming down c.*)

EVANGELINE. Don't dare to say a word to me—I couldn't bear it——

EDWARD. Vangy ! Look here, I——

MRS. HARGRAVES (*coming down R.C.—significantly*). Edward—I wouldn't !

EVANGELINE. Good-bye, Mrs. Hargraves ; good-bye, Miss Anning—I trust you will at least keep my name out of even an American paper.

ANN (L.C.). I'll do my very best, Miss Lipscomb, but it's a fearful temptation.

EVANGELINE. Thank you.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Need we be so serious about a thing like this ?

DEAN. My dear, much as I regret it, I must side with Evangeline until some—— (*Puts nightdress on table behind him.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. I can only trust to your kindness to prevent this becoming public property.

ANN. Certainly, if you wish it.

EDWARD. Dad, do you believe this of me ?

(*The DEAN glares at EDWARD.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES (*rather amused*). He does, Edward—a good man always does.

(*The DEAN looks at her.*)

I said it, Samuel—a good man always does.

(*The DEAN is about to protest. MRS. HARGRAVES stops him.*)

And the better the man the worse he thinks.

DEAN. Well, upon my word! Come, my dear——

(*Exeunt DEAN, and EVANGELINE R.*)

EDWARD (*to his mother*). Mater, you don't think——

MRS. HARGRAVES (*with a laugh*). My dear boy, knowing you as long as I have, how could I think! Edward, give Miss Anning some more tea.

(*EDWARD goes up and puts golf-stick in bag.*)

(*To ANN.*) And while you're interviewing my son, I'll just take these incriminating garments to my room.

(*EDWARD comes down behind C. to fender.*)

ANN (*starts as if she was going to say something*). Mr. Hargraves, are you really in a fit condition to be interviewed?

MRS. HARGRAVES (R.C.). Of course he is. I hope you'll call on me again; and, Miss Anning, don't tell him his novel is wonderful, because it isn't. Good-bye!

ANN (*impulsively*). Mrs. Hargraves, may I say just how much I like you?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Thank you.

ANN. Not one mother in a thousand would have behaved like you did.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Miss Anning, I've been a parson's wife since—the flood! But I'm still a woman of the world. (*Going to door R.*) Don't forget I want you to call on me. (*At door.*) I'm eighty-seven—up above!

(*Exit MRS. HARGRAVES door R.*)

A pause. EDWARD is looking angrily into fire. ANN looks at him with mock apprehension.)

ANN (*down R.*). Guess you'll never want another American girl at your tea parties again?

EDWARD (*turning*). Your conduct is past criticism!

ANN (*runs over to Chesterfield and sits on back—R. end—with feet on the seat*). Oh, Mr. Englishman, do please get really angry.

EDWARD. I am angry—very angry!

ANN. I really don't wonder.

EDWARD. To think that you, of all women, could stoop to do a——

ANN. Am I never to be forgiven? (*Hands together.*)

EDWARD. You've shocked Evangeline.

ANN. Wasn't it better for her to be shocked now than afterwards?

EDWARD. A nice, well-spoken little girl like that—oh, it's abominable.

ANN (*clapping her hands*). Mr. Englishman, you're just lovely when your beautiful pride has been injured.

EDWARD. What do you mean?

ANN. You didn't mind last night about Evangeline when—when you were sitting right here.

EDWARD. "Last night"! I was mad last night! Mad—mad! (*Crossing to C.*)

ANN. When daylight dawns, and everything becomes unromantic, we just become self-conscious and afraid, don't we, Mr. Englishman? (*Getting off sofa.*)

EDWARD. Look here—— (*marching over to ANN, who sits on chair down L.*) It's all jolly fine arguing, but those—those things of yours are extremely difficult to explain away.

ANN (*coolly*). That's why I chose them.

EDWARD. What am I to do? What in Heaven's name am I to do? (*Crosses R. and up.*)

ANN. Why do anything? Your moral character is unassailable.

EDWARD (*coming down c.*). You leave my morals out of it!

ANN. Why try to explain them away?

EDWARD. But that won't help Evangeline. She'll never believe—

ANN. Didn't I tell you she'd be ignorantly shocked?

EDWARD. You can't deny she had some reason?

ANN (*significantly*). Your mother only laughed! (*Rises, comes c.*)

EDWARD (*turns and stares at her*). So she did!

ANN. And I thought your mother was about the only person who counted.

EDWARD. Oh, it's no good arguing—you've got me into a hole—

ANN (*interrupting quickly*). And got you out of another one.

EDWARD. Then last night you talked a lot of—

ANN (*interrupting*). I think you're very ungrateful.

EDWARD. I'm not ungrateful. (*Down L.*)

ANN. I've lost a pair of silk stockings, (*cross up R.*) a beautiful shirt-waist, a pair of lovely bedroom slippers and a perfectly adorable— (*Coming over L.C. close to EDWARD.*)

EDWARD. Don't mention it! I forbid you to mention it!

ANN. Why, everybody wears one—even you. (*Going a little R.*) (*Chuckling.*) And flannelette at that!

EDWARD. I don't. I bought a pair of silk pyjamas this afternoon.

ANN. Pink or blue?

EDWARD. It's beside the point.

ANN. Not to mention the splendid copy I can't use.

EDWARD. I believe you did it just for the sake of copy!

ANN. Mr. Englishman, don't be unkind. (*Turning R.C.*)

EDWARD (*coming up to her*). I wish I'd never seen you. Whoever heard of a girl coming into a man's family, over the fire-escape, and causing such a lot of trouble?

ANN. Why don't you tell them the things belong to me?

EDWARD. You know I can't!

ANN (*innocently*). Why?

EDWARD. "Why? Why?" Oh, don't be silly! (*Goes over to L.*)

ANN. Suppose I tell them?

EDWARD. Now look here, you jolly well leave things alone. They're bad enough as they are.

ANN. Very well; but it's bad luck I can't get back the—

(EDWARD *gives her a look.*)

—the thing you don't like mentioned. It'll spoil the set!

EDWARD. SET!!! Well, you'll have to wear odd ones—it's your own fault.

ANN (*primly*). I think I'll be going. (*Marches up to window R.*)

EDWARD. No, you don't.

(EDWARD *walks quickly up to ANN, seizes her by left wrist and drags her well down R.C.*)

You jolly well go out of the door this time.

Then swings her round, so that they are quite close—face to face.)

And look here, I—

ANN. You're not going to say you never want to see me again?

EDWARD. That's precisely what I was going to say—!

(ANN *puts her face close up to his.*)

Precisely. (*Going L.C.*)

ANN (*going over close to him. He has his back to*

her). Don't you want a five and a half dollar bottle of that perfume?

EDWARD. No!

ANN (*same inflection*). Oh! Very well. Good-bye.

EDWARD. Good-bye.

(ANN *walks across to door R. Slams door hard, remaining just inside. EDWARD sighs and crosses slowly to L. ANN follows on tip-toe.*)

ANN (*suddenly, pushing EDWARD in the back*). D'you know something?

(EDWARD *jumps round. ANN springs on settee. EDWARD rushes up to her. She holds cushion in front of her.*)

EDWARD (*after BUS.*). No, I don't want to hear anything more.

ANN. Then you'll just have to! (*Sits on arm of settee.*)

EDWARD. Oh, well, if I must, I must! (*Down L.*)

ANN. Listen. To-night you'll want to see me more than you've ever wanted to see anything before in your life.

EDWARD. I shall do nothing of the sort.

ANN. You'll sit in this lovely old sofa, and you'll see me in the fire, and you'll get a whiff of that five and a half dollar scent, and you'll just feel mad——

EDWARD. Have you finished?

(*Warn Curtain.*)

ANN (*promptly*). No. You'll sit here, just where we sat, and you'll hate yourself for being a coward, and you'll try to think of Evangeline—and you won't be able to, because she's unthinkable—and you'll get fidgetier and fidgetier than just anything, and in the morning you'll have big purple indigo blues, and your

mother will laugh at you, and you'll just be the most miserable limp understudy of your magnificent moral self, and it will do you all the good in the world ; and later on you'll tell me I was right.

EDWARD. I shan't ; I shall never tell you anything again.

ANN. Oh, yes, you will. (*Gets off Chesterfield and comes down to EDWARD.*) A man always tells that sort of thing to the girl he's going to marry. (*Crosses to c.*)

EDWARD (*turning round and going towards her a step*). What do you mean ?

ANN (*cheekily*). Nothing. Good-bye. (*Waves her hand. Up to window—then stops and turns and comes down c.*) No ! After successfully introducing herself into Clerical English family, propriety demands of American Ann, conventional exit through door.

(*Exit ANN quickly, R.*)

(*EDWARD collapses on Chesterfield, looking after her.*)

(CURTAIN.)

(END OF ACT II.)

ACT III

SCENE.—*The same as ACTS I and II.*

TIME.—*Evening.*

Fire lighted. A reading-lamp lighted on EDWARD'S desk. Standard lamp lighted.

At rise of curtain, EDWARD discovered busily writing. He rises with a loose sheet of MS. which he reads over to himself out loud.

EDWARD. "There was a long silence. He inhaled the subtle scent of her hair. His pulse-beat quickened; he hardly dared to breathe lest some slight movement on his part should suggest a re-adjustment of their positions——" (*Down to settee—to himself.*) That's not quite it. No—— (*Thinks, walks to settee, sits and smells sofa-cushions for further inspiration.*) "A re-adjustment of their positions——" (*With a sudden idea.*) I know!

(*He jumps up and starts writing again. Enter the DEAN and BILLY R. DEAN crosses over to L. corner.*)

Dear old dad! (*To BILLY.*) Hullo, old man!

BILLY (*depressed*). Hullo, old man!

DEAN (*severely*). Edward!

(*EDWARD does not hear. BILLY rather apprehensively gets close to EDWARD.*)

(*Loudly.*) Edward!!

(BILLY jogs EDWARD'S elbow. *He rises. Both stand up stage C.*)

Now, Edward, as there are only men in the room, perhaps you will explain matters.

EDWARD (*comes down C.*). My dear dad, I have nothing to explain.

DEAN. I should say, judging by the number and appearance of the articles brought to light at such an inopportune time, that you had a good deal to explain.

BILLY (*coming down C. and speaking uncomfortably*). Give me a cigarette, Edward.

(EDWARD *takes out cigarette case.*)

DEAN. Edward!

(BILLY *is taking cigarette.*)

(*Loudly and sternly.*) Edward! Attend to me!

(*Both men jump. EDWARD turns round, holding case behind his back. BILLY takes case, takes out a cigarette and returns case to EDWARD'S hand, still outstretched behind his back. BILLY lights cigarette and retires a little up stage, smoking.*)

I have done my best to—to put a kinder complexion upon the affair for Evangeline's sake, but my task has been indeed a hard one under the overwhelming burden of evidence before me.

EDWARD (C.). I repeat I have nothing to say by way of explanation. If you or Evangeline choose to judge me by appearances, dad, why then you must.

DEAN. You mean to tell me you have no idea how those—h'm—intimate feminine garments got into your room?

EDWARD. I may have ideas, but—I keep them to myself.

DEAN (*a little more indulgently*). Edward, I may be a Dean, but in this instance I must judge you as a man of the world; and as a man of the world, there is only one possible explanation——

EDWARD. And I suppose the usual man of the world's excuse.

DEAN. Exactly! I mean—certainly not!

EDWARD (*getting nettled*). Look here, dad, leave the man of the world out of it and judge me as the Dean.

(BILLY *shakes his head and saunters down to R. of EDWARD.*)

DEAN (*wrathfully*). Very well—I will!

BILLY (*R. of EDWARD*). I should stick to the man of the world, Edward.

EDWARD. I prefer dad to stick to his own profession.

(BILLY *shrugs his shoulders and retires up stage again, picking up a book from table R.*)

(*To DEAN.*) Now, sir. (*Down c.*)

DEAN (*finding it somewhat difficult to attack as the DEAN*). Can't we—can't you offer some—

EDWARD (*interposing*). I've told you, sir, I cannot. I don't know how the things got here.

DEAN. Evangeline is willing to accept any reasonable explanation.

EDWARD. I have no explanation to offer.

DEAN. I even think, in time, she may reconsider the possibility of renewing her engagement.

EDWARD. I certainly shall never renew my offer.

DEAN. You mean, sir——? (*Up to EDWARD.*)

EDWARD. I mean this, sir: it was to please you and the mater I proposed to her. Evangeline wasn't in love with me and I wasn't in love with her. Perhaps that excuses her, but would any one else condemn me as she did? Did the mater? Did Miss Anning? Do you, Billy?

BILLY (*briskly*). Oh, no, I don't, old man! (*Turns up to window and resumes reading.*)

EDWARD. It's left to my father and the girl I'm supposed to marry.

DEAN (*softening*). Come, come, Edward, you must remember the shock to a young girl's feelings that the unconventional appearance of such garments would produce, under the circumstances——

EDWARD. Good Heavens, *why*?

DEAN. You don't even suspect any one of playing a very foolish practical joke?

EDWARD. I may suspect—but it's outside the point.

BILLY (*coming down R.C.*). But why not expose the joker and regain your own lost moral character?

EDWARD. Oh, dry up!

BILLY. Certainly, old man—certainly. (*Retires up again.*)

DEAN. What possible motive——? (*Sits on settee, arranges cushions. He sniffs.*) God bless my soul, what a very remarkable thing—I——

EDWARD (*self-consciously*). What is the matter?

DEAN (*taking up cushion and smelling it methodically*). Yes, it is—no—yes, it must be!

BILLY. What is it, sir?

DEAN. Edward, I think I have discovered a clue.

EDWARD. A clue?

DEAN. There is a distinct resemblance in the aroma of this cushion to the aroma that pervaded those—those vestments your mother has taken upstairs.

EDWARD (*very nervously*). Oh, nonsense, dad——

DEAN (*smelling cushion*). Yes, distinct. I have a very keen sense of smell, Edward, as you know; and this evening when your mother and I were searching for a possible name on the night—the raiment in question, I noticed this peculiarly delicious—I mean, pungent odour.

EDWARD (*C.*). Now look here, dad, why not let the matter drop?

DEAN. Drop—with a clue like this? (*Rises.*

Down L. a step.) No, sir ; it shall never be said I left a stone unturned to clear my son's moral character. (*Going towards door with cushion.*) I shall take this and compare it with—— (*Over R. He stops suddenly.*) Edward!

EDWARD. Dad!

DEAN. You have perverted the truth. You do know who left those things here—she's living in this hotel.

EDWARD. My dear old dad, what——

DEAN (*tragically smelling cushion*). It's not the hair-wash. It's that American girl. I noticed it on my hand after shaking hands with her.

BILLY (*coming down R. of DEAN*). Still, you know, sir, you're not absolutely certain.

DEAN (*loudly*). "Certain!"

(*BILLY retires up to window seat in great confusion.*)

I am perfectly certain. (*To EDWARD.*) And you can't deny it.

EDWARD. I do deny it.

DEAN. You prevaricate, sir—my nose tells me you prevaricate.

EDWARD. I deny that Miss Aining—dash it all, governor, suppose she does use the same scent—what of it?

DEAN. I shall reserve my judgment, Edward—I may be wrong. My nose may have misled me—I trust it has. If I have wronged you and this young woman, I am deeply grieved; if you have compromised any one, I trust you will act as my son—as a gentleman would act. (*BUS. with cushion.*)

(*Exit DEAN R. with cushion.*)

(*EDWARD strolls over to L. corner.*)

BILLY (*to EDWARD*). Well, old man, what's the next move?

EDWARD (*looking at him*). Hanged if I know!

BILLY. I say, Teddy, was he right?

EDWARD (*shortly*). No!

(EDWARD *sees parcel and note on chair L. corner.*)

By Jove! *What's this!*

BILLY. What's what?

EDWARD. A note from the mater. (*He opens it, coming L.C.*) "My dear boy, you'd better return these things. You might have trusted me—you've known me long enough. Your loving mother."

BILLY. What a splendid mother! (*Goes over to EDWARD.*) Why don't you own up, Teddy? I've known you long enough.

EDWARD. You wouldn't believe me if I did.

BILLY (*seriously*). My dear old chap, I'd believe anything you told me—we've always been such old pals. I know at Cambridge you were a fearful old anchorite and all that sort of thing; but hang it all, what earthly harm is there in owning up to a few high-class wild oats?

EDWARD (*turning fiercely on BILLY*). Damn it! They weren't wild oats! Does she look like wild oats?

(BILLY, *alarmed, backs away to c.*)

BILLY. You don't mean it's little Miss—What's-her-name?

EDWARD (*curtly*). Yes.

BILLY. Great Scott! What luck!

EDWARD (*L.C.—fiercely*). What the devil d'you mean by "luck"?

(*Both c.*)

BILLY. Nothing, old chap—nothing! Of course she couldn't—I mean, why did she leave 'em here?

EDWARD (*L.*). I didn't—! Well, hang it all, last night, somehow or other, it came out I'd got engaged to Evangeline over the 'phone; well, she lec-

tured me, and wormed out the fact that I didn't love Evangeline—said it was impossible.

BILLY (*sitting on arm of chair c. during preceding speech*). Well?

EDWARD. Well, she ended by swearing she'd stop it; of course, I thought it was all chaff, but you see—well—she wanted to choke Evangeline off me.

BILLY (*after slight pause*). Well, she's done that all right, old chap! And she'll make a wife in ten thousand.

EDWARD. You don't imagine I'm going to——

BILLY. I don't see how you can help it. Any common or garden knight would do as much for his lady fair.

EDWARD (*crossing to R.C.*). Don't be absurd. I hardly know the girl—it's absurd.

BILLY. Edward, some of the biggest acts of genius have been performed in the space of a single instant.

EDWARD (*miserably*). I've told her I never want to see her again.

BILLY (*irritated at his stupidity*). Good Lord, what did you do an asinine thing like that for?

EDWARD (*seated in chair c.*). I insulted her and made a perfect fool of myself—she'll never forgive me.

BILLY. Look here, old man, this room's too small for you. You'd better come out for a stroll. (*Up to EDWARD.*)

EDWARD (*looking at the window*). No, no, I——

BILLY. Come on out and have a drink. You'll only get the blues if you stop in.

EDWARD (*turning his head and looking at BILLY*). The blues? (*Struck by the word.*)

BILLY. Yes, the blues!

EDWARD (*to BILLY*). Yes, she said I should get the blues.

BILLY. Well, she was right. Come along out, and we'll fix things up in the morning. (*Crosses to door R.*)

EDWARD (*with another look at window*). Room's

stuffy—I'll just open the window. (*Goes up to window, opens it and looks out.*)

BILLY (*by the door*). No, she won't, Teddy! Not again to-night!

EDWARD. Yes, I think I could do with a drink.

(*Enter MRS. HARGRAVES R.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. Hullo, Billy!

BILLY. Hullo, Mrs. Hargraves!

MRS. HARGRAVES. Well, Edward, did you get my note?

EDWARD. Yes, mater.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Are you going out?

EDWARD. Yes, ten minutes drink—er—er—stroll, just round the corner.

(*Exeunt EDWARD and BILLY R.*)

(*MRS. HARGRAVES goes up to shut window. ANN appears at window.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES (*genuinely surprised, but relieved*). Miss Anning? Good Heavens!

(*Enter ANN through window.*)

ANN. Good-evening, Mrs. Hargraves. (*Smiling whimsically.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES (*laughing*). Dear me, what a fright you gave me. I thought you were a burglar.

ANN. I'm so awfully sorry.

MRS. HARGRAVES. How on earth did you——

ANN. I just came along the fire-escape.

MRS. HARGRAVES. There—I told Edward they were dangerous.

ANN (*smiling*). I wonder if they are.

MRS. HARGRAVES. But what on earth made you——
(*She stops as a sudden idea strikes her.*)

ANN. It's really easier from the next flat.

MRS. HARGRAVES (*now both amused and interested*). Is it?

ANN. Mrs. Hargraves, it's not the first time I've braved the dangers of that fire-escape.

MRS. HARGRAVES (*understandingly*). Oh!

ANN. I came in last night.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Last night?

ANN. After you'd gone to bed.

MRS. HARGRAVES. What in the world did Edward say?

ANN. He was a little surprised, I think.

MRS. HARGRAVES. A little! My poor dear son must have been paralysed. (*Sits c.*)

ANN. I rather expected he would be.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Why?

ANN. I'd read his book.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Oh, of course——

ANN. I wonder why he didn't consult you?
(*Kneels at chair R. of MRS. HARGRAVES.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. How do you know he didn't?

ANN. He couldn't possibly have made such mistakes.

MRS. HARGRAVES. *He's very, very young.*

ANN. I think he's just the youngest thing I've ever met.

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear, he's been a very grave anxiety.

ANN. He must have been.

MRS. HARGRAVES. You see, as a parson's wife, I was so handicapped.

ANN. Exactly.

MRS. HARGRAVES. And now, through this absurd episode, I can't even get him safely married.

ANN. Of course, one feels sorry for poor Miss Lipscomb, but——

MRS. HARGRAVES. "Sorry"? I'm not at all sorry for her. Why should she jump to conclusions? A girl brought up in a Cathedral Town, too!

ANN. That must be the limit.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Of course, as Edward's mother, I was convulsed with the joke.

ANN (*eagerly*). You do think it was quite harmless?

MRS. HARGRAVES (*shrewdly*). Yes, of course.

ANN (*nervously*). It wasn't exactly on the level.

MRS. HARGRAVES. I wouldn't have missed it for worlds, and I'm not at all sure I shall mind if Evangeline never recovers from the shock.

ANN. Why?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Because I feel sure I can never let him marry a woman so utterly lacking in humour.

ANN (*embracing her suddenly*). Oh, I'm so glad.

(ANN begins to cry softly. MRS. HARGRAVES bends over her.)

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear, what on earth's the matter?

ANN. You're the matter! You're just the loveliest thing I've ever met. (*Slight pause.*) I wonder why you married a parson!

MRS. HARGRAVES. Every woman has her responsibilities. He is my most adorable responsibility—after my boy.

ANN (*nervously—rising and going down R. a little*). Mrs. Hargraves—I've got to tell you something. Those—those—(*pointing to her belongings*) those things are mine!

MRS. HARGRAVES (*after a slight pause, and with quiet good-humour*). I know.

ANN. You know?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Yes, I've known all the time.

ANN. But how——?

MRS. HARGRAVES (*smiling*). The favourite scent!

ANN (*smiling*). I wondered if I'd put enough——

MRS. HARGRAVES (*mock horror*). Enough? Enough to sink a nation! You wanted me to know? (*Rises and goes to her.*)

ANN (*surprised that she should doubt*). Why, of course. Oh, wasn't it a perfectly lovely idea?

MRS. HARGRAVES. Rather unusually daring ; but why did you do it ?

ANN. I did so want to get Edward out of that awful engagement. (*Crossing L.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES. But how could you—— ?

ANN (*at L. arm of settee*). Last night I got it all out of him, and when I heard she'd accepted him over the 'phone, that just finished me.

MRS. HARGRAVES. I'm afraid I agree with you.

ANN. I told him a girl who'd miss such a lovely moment over an old 'phone would make his life a—well, you know what.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Yes, I know what ; I quite understand. But why are you so interested in my boy ? (*Sits on Chesterfield.*)

ANN (*kneels L. of MRS. HARGRAVES*). I wanted to know if your son was as white as the soul of his own book.

MRS. HARGRAVES. And you found ?

ANN. I found what was better ; a child's soul with a human understanding.

MRS. HARGRAVES. A child's soul in a man's body !

ANN. That's why I love your son, Mrs. Hargraves. I fell in love with the writer of the story—then I discovered he lived here and I fell in love with the real man (*with a little burst of laughter*). I had to fall out of a punt to introduce myself. Oh ! It wasn't easy to love that way.

MRS. HARGRAVES. I wonder if he'll ever love you ?

ANN (*pleadingly*). Don't wonder—he does.

MRS. HARGRAVES. I wonder if he knows ?

ANN. Not yet.

(*Enter DEAN R. He carries the cushion with both hands and is looking extremely worried. He starts as he sees ANN.*)

ANN. Good-evening, Mr. Dean. (*Rises, crosses to DEAN.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES (*rises*). My dear Samuel, what on earth are you doing with that cushion?

DEAN (R.). I have (*ignoring ANN*) discovered a clue.

MRS. HARGRAVES (*seeing what has happened, takes things off chair*). You've not said good-evening to Miss Anning.

DEAN. Much as I regret it, I do not see fit to address Miss Anning.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Why?

DEAN (*sternly*). "*Why*"? My dear! (*He pauses.*) No—— (*To ANN.*) I *will* say—"good-evening."

ANN (*with a beaming smile, shakes cushion*). Good-evening, Mr. Dean. I've just been telling Mrs. Hargraves how wonderfully clever I think your son is.

DEAN (*stiffly*). You're very good. But what I was about to say——

ANN. He's just the nicest boy I've met for years.

DEAN. H'm—yes, no doubt, but——

MRS. HARGRAVES. My dear Samuel, I do wish you'd put that cushion down.

(ANN goes up stage a little.)

DEAN. But, my dear, I have come here expressly to speak about this cushion.

MRS. HARGRAVES (*rising*). My dear Samuel, I have something to tell you of the greatest importance.

DEAN. But *this* is important!

MRS. HARGRAVES. You can talk to me later about the cushion.

ANN (*coming down suddenly*). Oh, give her that cushion. (*Takes cushion and gives it to MRS. HARGRAVES.*) Mrs. Hargraves—I'd better be going. (C.)

DEAN. Quite so, quite so.

MRS. HARGRAVES. No, my dear, please don't go. Wait for Edward, and when you've seen him, I want you to bring him up to see us. (*Kissing her.*)

DEAN. My dear, I don't think you quite appreciate who it is you are embracing!

MRS. HARGRAVES. Come, Samuel. (*Crosses to R.*)

ANN. Mrs. Hargraves, I think I'd like to have just a little talk with Mr. Hargraves alone.

DEAN (*horrified*). Alone! (*Emphatically.*) Certainly not!

MRS. HARGRAVES (*going to door*). A most excellent idea. (*To ANN.*) You'll bring Edward upstairs when you've—

DEAN (*interrupting*). Very well, my dear, I will talk to this young person alone.

ANN. Oh, my gracious—don't you dare to call me a young person. (*To MRS. HARGRAVES.*) That is just one expression I won't stand. (*To DEAN.*) No, sir, not even from you. (*Goes C.*)

MRS. HARGRAVES (*smiling*). Don't let her keep you too long, Samson—er—Samuel! (*Laughing over her own error.*)

DEAN. Certainly not—certainly not——! What I have to say I shall put briefly.

MRS. HARGRAVES. Ah, you don't know her, you don't know her!

(*Exit MRS. HARGRAVES, laughing.*)

(*A pause. The DEAN draws himself up stiffly.*)

DEAN (*pompously*). Now, Miss Anning!

ANN (*coolly*). Didn't you understand it was I who asked you for an interview?

DEAN (*much taken aback*). Good gracious!

ANN (*laughing*). Oh, you are such a perfectly adorable old darling. Do you know when I first saw you, I just loved you right away! (*Hand on his arm.*)

DEAN (*taking hand off*). Now it must be distinctly

understood that I cannot permit myself to be wheedled!

ANN. What a pity.

DEAN. A pity?

ANN (*putting her arm through his*). I'm just too cute for anything at wheedling.

DEAN (*removing her arm again*). You—you—mustn't do it!

ANN. Do sit down! (*Drags him to chair c. and pushes him into it.*)

DEAN (*nervously*). This is not the way I had intended to conduct this interview. (*Rises.*)

ANN. Do sit down and look cosy. (*Sits him down again.*)

DEAN. But I don't feel cosy. (*Rises.*)

ANN. I'll soon fix that. (*Sits him down again and places cushion at his back.*)

DEAN (*sitting*). Well, perhaps, for a few brief moments.

ANN. Now listen! (*Hand on his shoulder.*)

DEAN. My dear Miss—Miss—— (*Taking hand off.*) Thank you!

ANN. Have you ever thought how 'twould be to have a very affectionate little daughter? (*Hand on his shoulder.*)

DEAN (*removing her hand again.*) I've already told you I cannot permit it.

ANN. Oh, I forgot. You never had a little daughter of your own; I feel so sorry for you.

DEAN (*rather sadly*). Yes, yes; if we had been blessed, but——

ANN (*very sweetly*). Shall I show you what it is like to have a little daughter?

DEAN (*absent-mindedly*). Yes—yes—I mean, *certainly not!*

ANN (*at back of his chair—arms round his neck*). How 'twould be to be bullied (*BUS.*) and loved (*BUS.*) by me in just the most lovely way.

DEAN. This is not fair play.

ANN. Yes, it is. (*Kisses him.*)

DEAN (*completely staggered*). Now she's kissed me!

ANN. Of course, and she's going to do it again and again—until a nasty, frumpy, wicked, dear, dearer, dearest, sweet old darling Dean smiles just evermore! (*Goes down L.*)

DEAN. You know this is not the way Deans are treated.

ANN. Yes, it is. Now smile!

DEAN (*emphatically*). I shall not smile!

(BUS. DEAN catches ANN's eye, and smiles; looks stern immediately, then smiles a second time.)

ANN (*as DEAN smiles the second time*). Oh, you wicked old storyteller—you are smiling!

DEAN (*trying to excuse himself*). Well, for a few brief moments, perhaps. I was thinking of a funny little story I read in the "Athenæum"—!

ANN. Now laugh!

DEAN (*completely breaking up, and laughing heartily*). I shall—certainly—not—laugh! Ha, ha, ha, ha!!

(ANN runs up to DEAN, takes him by both hands, pulls him up and round to L.C. Both laughing heartily. The laugh is worked up. The DEAN quite suddenly stops short, and pulls himself together. When he stops, ANN stops at the same time.)

Humph! (*Pause.*) And I actually took you for one of the foolish virgins!

ANN. My gracious me, you never mean to say you thought that?

DEAN (*as if lecturing a naughty child*). And you've turned out a positive Delilah!

ANN. Well, maybe.

DEAN. This was a most unseemly proceeding.

ANN. (*demurely*). Was it?

DEAN. Most! You know, that kiss! If my dear wife——!

ANN. Tell me, ~~have~~ you ever studied my sex?

DEAN. Not often!—er—I ~~mean~~ only once, my dear wife——!

ANN (*shaking her head*). You tried, but all the time she has just been studying you. That's what always happens with a really beautiful character—like Mrs. Hargraves.

DEAN. H'm—yes—perhaps you're right.

ANN. Don't you think she knows best what you want? (*Both her hands on his shoulders.*)

DEAN. Yes—yes—we will consult her together.

(ANN *puts her arm through his and they walk over R.C.*)

ANN (*as they cross*). I would—right now!

(*Warn lights.*)

DEAN (R.C.—*utterly under her spell*). But, you know, you wheedled me!

ANN (*smiling*). Yes, I wheedled you.

DEAN. You deliberately made love to me—yes, to me.

ANN (*very sweetly*). Ah, nobody can make love—love just makes itself.

DEAN. I wonder!

ANN. You ask Mrs. Hargraves—she knows just everything.

DEAN. Yes, I will consult my dear wife. (*Goes to door R.*)

ANN. And I'll just stay here and consult your dear boy! (*Goes C.*)

(DEAN *returns to R.C. Holds out both hands. ANN returns and takes them.*)

DEAN. And you really love him?

(ANN *bows her head.*)

Bless you, my dear!

(DEAN kisses her head. Then he notices the perfume.)

Delicious ! Delicious !

(Exit DEAN R.)

(After DEAN's exit, ANN kisses her hand towards door R., then gives a well-contented sigh and goes over to chair L. She picks up the nightdress. Telephone bell rings, and continues ringing until she takes receiver off.)

ANN (going up to telephone). All right, all right, I'm coming ! (She takes up receiver.) Yes,—who—Miss Lipscomb— ! Evangeline ! American Ann, you're no coward ! (Into 'phone.) Yes, send her right up in the elevator. (Puts receiver down.) (Begins to take her hair down.) May as well give her a good shock while I'm about it !

(She takes her hair down and ties it up with ribbon, crosses to door, turns out light and opens door a little way, then curls up on Chesterfield.)

(On Chesterfield—solemnly). " Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prisms ! (Repeats in a half-whisper.) Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prisms !

(Enter EVANGELINE R. She comes in, quickly closing the door behind her. She looks round, surprised at the darkness and then comes to C.)

EVANGELINE. Mrs. Hargraves !

ANN (putting her head up suddenly). Hallo !

EVANGELINE (C.). Oh ! (Startled.)

ANN (cheerfully). Good-evening, Miss Lipscomb !

EVANGELINE. Oh !

(EVANGELINE turns to leave the room, but ANN gets to the door first.)

ANN. No you don't (at door, and switching on light). Coward ! (Mock dramatic.)

EVANGELINE. Oh, oh! (*Recoiling.*) You horrid woman!

ANN (*beaming*). And I thought I looked perfectly fascinating.

EVANGELINE. What are you doing here? And with your hair down!!

ANN. What are *you* doing here? And with your hair up!!

EVANGELINE. Alone!

ANN. Unchaperoned!!

EVANGELINE. I see! It was *you* then who left those things here?

ANN (*smiling*). I did it to see if I could shock you—I succeeded.

EVANGELINE. Then you are a—a—one of those awful——

ANN. No, I'm not—but I'd rather be as *human* as "one of those awful"—than *you*! See? (*Crosses to L.*)

EVANGELINE (*shocked*). Oh! Oh!

ANN. It's the second time to-day, Miss Lipscomb, you arrived at the wrong conclusion.

EVANGELINE. But—— (*Coming down c.*)

ANN (*going up to her*). There are no "buts"! You're a horrid little prude! A narrow-minded, nasty-minded, little prude! (*Up to EVANGELINE.*)

EVANGELINE. How dare you say that? You——

ANN (*sweetly*). Oh, I beg your pardon. It's very likely not your own fault. (*Fiercely.*) But you needn't have a nasty imagination about the dear baby you got engaged to over the 'phone.

EVANGELINE. He told you that!

ANN (*turning away to L.*). He couldn't help himself—even in your prim little hands, he simply couldn't help himself. (*Sits on L. arm of Chesterfield.*)

EVANGELINE. You're a horrid little cat.

ANN. Miaow! (*Bus.*) Cats is wise! (*Sitting down.*) So you find it so difficult to marry, you've come round to steal the dear babe again?

EVANGELINE. Pray how long have you known him? (*Front of chair c.*)

ANN. Ever since yesterday. Long enough to prevent him ruining his life.

EVANGELINE (*sneeringly*). How on earth can two people fall in love in a day?

ANN. Yes, you are just the sort of girl who'd take love out of eternity and tie it up in a parcel. Can't you see you're impossible?

EVANGELINE. Impossible?

ANN. Except as a curate's wife.

EVANGELINE (*heatedly*). I hate and detest— (*correcting herself.*) I mean, I have a natural antipathy to curates.

ANN (*thoughtfully*). Is that so? (*Comes down L.—half to herself.*) Seems I'll have to give you some chance after all.

EVANGELINE. Give me— What d'you mean?

ANN. If I don't you'll never get a look in. (*Up to her.*)

EVANGELINE (*haughtily*). Indeed!

ANN. See here—you don't love him, and he doesn't love you; but he loves a mighty big proposition full of magic. (*Going down L.*) And even you might sprout in sandy soil.

EVANGELINE. Sprout! (*Strong.*)

ANN (*whimsically*). I suppose I'll have to risk it. (*Comes back L.C.*) Listen. Sit down. (*Sits her in chair.*)

EVANGELINE (*resenting it*). Don't touch me, please!

ANN (*sitting on R. arm of Chesterfield, facing EVANGELINE*). Listen! Edward Hargraves has a power of loving he's just been sitting on. He's not frittered it away like lots of men. When the lid's off, there's going to be trouble or bliss for the girl who removes that lid. I was going to do it to-night, but I'll give you the first chance.

EVANGELINE. I—I—don't understand—

ANN (*sharply*). Yes, you do; because you're show-

ing the first primitive selfish symptom of jealousy.

EVANGELINE. I'm *not* jealous!

ANN. Yes, you are; but only because you don't know what love really means. If you don't take chance you'll never get another.

EVANGELINE. How do you know?

ANN. Because to-night Edward Hargraves is going to find the key to his own particular personality. One of us is going to hand him that key, when the lid's off. (*Rising and going down L.*)

EVANGELINE (*hesitates*). I—I really fail to follow you.

ANN. See here—I'll help you all I can. (*Nightly from chair L.*) Put on this. (*Advancing.*) EVANGELINE.)

EVANGELINE. Put on—— (*Rising and retreating over to R.*)

ANN. Dress the part my way!

EVANGELINE. *Never!* How dare you suggest—

ANN. Oh, how *were* you brought up?

EVANGELINE. "Brought up"? What do you mean?

ANN. Afraid of wearing a nightgown over a party dress. (*Laughing.*)

EVANGELINE. It's not that—it's the idea!

ANN. It's just too funny for words. Especially when the party dress isn't half proper enough for a moral little model like yourself.

EVANGELINE. How dare you say that! It's a very smart gown!

ANN. Oh, it's smart—it's too smart. You have twice the chance if you wore something a little proper-like.

EVANGELINE. *Never!*

ANN. Very well, then. Remember you're taking big risks. (*BUS.*) Nice nightgown!

EVANGELINE. But why use such an indelicate method?

ANN. To-day you let him see you were scared at a nighty. Show him to-night you aren't really shocked—make fun of it. Let him see you have got a sense of humour. Maybe you'll have a chance!

EVANGELINE. What am I to do?

ANN (*with a chuckle*). Let your hair down. (*Makes a grab at EVANGELINE's hair and lets it down.*)

EVANGELINE. Let my hair down? No! Leave my hair alone, Miss Anning. How can you—?

ANN. Be quick. Why, you've got lovely hair. Now put on this!

(EVANGELINE *hesitates.*)

If you don't, I will.

EVANGELINE. Oh! (*Slips it on.*)

ANN. Why, you look just too cute for anything!

EVANGELINE (*miserably*). Yes, I dare say. But I don't like it, Miss Anning. I don't like it at all. Supposing somebody should come— (*etc., etc., etc.*)

ANN (*as soon as nightdress is on.*) Now, come along over here.

(ANN *seizes EVANGELINE by both hands and drags her across to Chesterfield and puts her on to it.*)

Now put your feet up! Curl up there?

(EVANGELINE *does so, under protest. ANN rushes across to door R.*)

I'll just listen. (*Listens at door.*) I think there's somebody coming.

(*During the following lines, EVANGELINE is getting more and more nervous and hysterical.*)

EVANGELINE. Oh, no, no, no! I don't want anybody to come. Don't let any one come!

ANN (*slily*). Probably Edward!

EVANGELINE. Oh, no, not Edward; don't say it's Edward!!

ANN (*coming to c.*) Why, don't you love him?
(*Mock surprise.*)

EVANGELINE (*hesitating*). Er—no. (*Very quickly correcting herself.*) Yes, I do! . . . no, I don't . . . well, perhaps I do a little! (*Suddenly realizing things—very strong.*) No, I don't! And I won't!!! (*Gets off sofa and tears off nightdress, which she leaves on stage down L.*) Take this disgusting garment away! Take it away, I say! (*Indignantly crosses to R.C. and begins twisting up her hair in a little knot on top of her head.*) How could I do such a thing? How could you ever have persuaded me to do anything so awful? Do you realize that even my very own father has never seen me in such a costume? What would people say? What would the congregation say? You abominable girl! (*Snatches wrap from ANN and goes off R.*)

(*Exit EVANGELINE R.*)

(*There is a pause after EVANGELINE's exit.*)

ANN. Well, I guess generosity does pay, after all. My poor nighty! (*Picks up nightdress and kisses it; then begins to put it on.*) Nighty's all right, guess it depends who's inside it. (*Laughing.*) Gee, she did look a sight!

(*She puts on nightdress, standing on Chesterfield to see herself in mirror. Then walks across to R., admiring her train. Picks up book from table, and seats herself c.*)

"Hannah's Honeymoon"—his book! (*Kisses book, then reads.*) "Hannah understood then what she'd never realized before, that the delicate illusions of a successful engagement are the delicate illusions of a successful marriage." (*Kisses the page.*) Gee! He does understand some things.

(*Bell.*)

(ANN runs to door and switches off light. Then goes to Chesterfield, pulls it round obliquely by fire and lies down.)

(EDWARD is heard speaking to BILLY. ANN jumps up.)

Billy!!! Ann, you're no coward!

(Runs to back of stage, picks up drapery, goes back to sofa, puts drapery over her feet then falls back on the cushions and pretends to be asleep.)

(Enter BILLY, followed by EDWARD R. EDWARD thoughtfully crosses to sofa. BILLY turns up stage to window.)

BILLY (looking out of window). To think what joy might have come through this window.

(EDWARD sees ANN. Is struck motionless, then he suddenly runs up stage silently to BILLY and drags him down to c.)

(Seeing ANN on Chesterfield.) Great Scott!

EDWARD. 'SSh!!! (Strong.)

(EDWARD creeps on tip-toe to above settee. BILLY follows on tip-toe to foot of settee.)

EDWARD. She's sound asleep!

BILLY. My maternal aunt, what a study!

EDWARD (very nervously). What on earth—how the——

BILLY (lost in artistic fervour.) Well, of all the lucky beggars, I think you're the luckiest.

EDWARD. Don't be an ass! What am I—how on earth——?

BILLY (still looking at ANN). Isn't she a perfect little darling?

EDWARD. Billy, for Heaven's sake, what am I to do?

BILLY. Edward, I shall get riled with you in a minute. (Coming down c.)

EDWARD (*more nervously than ever*). I wish the mater would come in. (*Pause.*) Dear old mater!

BILLY (*disgusted*). You make me sick!

EDWARD. You can't deny it's awkward!

BILLY (*indignantly*). Awkward! *What's awkward?*

EDWARD. Why will she do such outrageous things?

BILLY (*helplessly*). Oh, my good man, were all your ancestors Puritans?

EDWARD. Can't you suggest something?

BILLY. I think you're the most ungrateful devil I ever met. Here's a perfectly gorgeous gift from Heaven falls through the window from America and——

EDWARD (*interrupting him*). Confound it all, I know all that. But I'm not even engaged to her—yet.

BILLY (*near door R.*). Do you want me to hold your hand?

EDWARD (*suddenly*). I say, I wish you'd get out.

BILLY (*encouragingly*). Ah, that's better; that's much better.

(*Exit BILLY R., laughing.*)

(EDWARD *switches up light and crosses to back of Chesterfield; looks down at ANN.*)

EDWARD (*after pause—sternly*). You know you're not asleep.

ANN (*coolly*). Well, you know best. (*Opening her eyes to speak, then closing them again.*)

EDWARD. I suppose you grasped what Billy was thinking!

ANN (*she starts getting up*). Oh! Oh!!

EDWARD. Don't you move! Don't you dare to move! (*Comes round to R. end of Chesterfield.*)

ANN. Why? (*Sitting back in great alarm.*) Why?

EDWARD. You know perfectly well you've be-

haved outrageously. Coming here at this time in—like that—in that——

ANN (*sitting up and facing him—hands folded*). Please, I thought——

EDWARD (*decisively*). Look here, I'm going out to post a letter. If you're not gone when I come back, I shall—— (*He pauses, inspiration failing him.*) I shall——

ANN. Well, what will you do?

EDWARD (*helplessly*). Don't you know that you're adorable?

ANN (*with a fascinating smile*). No! Am I?

EDWARD (*now quite hypnotized*). That hair is——

ANN. Is it?

EDWARD (*desperately*). Well, it's making me lose my head!

ANN (*significantly*). That's not all you're losing.

EDWARD (*suddenly*). Look here, you know—this is beyond a joke! Beyond a joke!

ANN (*getting up suddenly*). No, it isn't!

(*She takes off nightdress to his blank amazement, and wriggling out of it, lets it fall to her feet.*)

It's just the joke, with no beyond. (*Crosses to R.C. cheekily.*)

EDWARD (*with set teeth, coming close to her c.*). Yes, you're right—it is the joke with no beyond. Please understand you've made a fool of me for the last time.

(*Music pp. through dialogue till curtain.*)

ANN (*quietly—a little frightened*). Oh—— (*Pause.*) Oh, very well, I'll go.

(*ANN goes up to window ; turns, comes down to EDWARD and holds out her hand.*)

(*Down c.*) Good-bye, Mr. Englishman.

(*EDWARD stands with back to her, and takes no notice.*)

ANN goes up to window, looks round at EDWARD, then comes right down again c.)

(*Half sobbing.*) Oh, you don't know what a brute you are! (*She turns up to window again.*)

EDWARD (*strong*). Stop!

(*He goes up to her, takes her by both hands and brings her down c.*)

(*Stammering.*) Don't go! I can't let you go! I—I—

ANN (*R.C.*). Well?

EDWARD (*strong passion*). I'm awake—I'm alive—I'm in love!

ANN (*very sweetly*). Maybe!

EDWARD (*taking her in his arms c.*). Ann! (*Then with strong passion.*) ANN!!!!

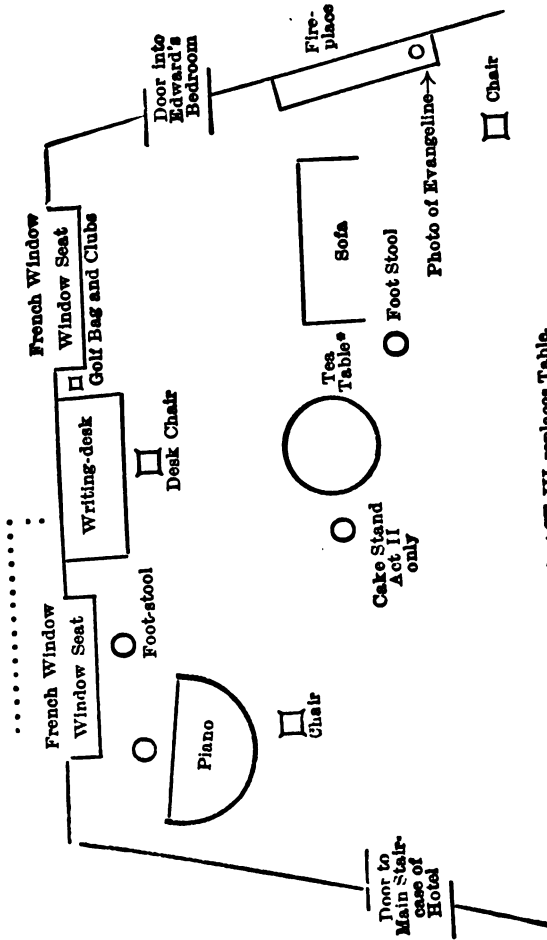
(*Embrace.*)

(*Music swells.*)

CURTAIN.

END OF PLAY.

Fire Escape Railings showing



* Chair in ACT III replaces Table.
On the Writing Desk are Photographs of Edward's Father and Mother.

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